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STARBURST

THE BEST OF BRITISH TELEVISION FANTASY



PATRICK MACNEE
ON THE AVENGERS



THE LAST WORD ON
THE PRISONER



DOCTOR WHO
THE NEW SEASON



SPECIAL FEATURE ON TV AVENGER
DIANA RIGG



DOCTOR WHO

STARBLAST

THE BEST OF BRITISH TELEVISION FANTASY



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STARBLAST

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Such low-budget American fantasy flicks as The Big Meal Eater, Greek Maggot, Bingo and The Lifespan are the critical firing line of Alan Jones this month, plus our regular columns on videos and books, John Brosnan's It's Only A Movie and TV Zone by Richard Holliss.

(Doctor's Note: The Starburst Data Bank will return next month when Dr Sally Gary will, once again, delve into her film trivia filing cabinet to administer the answer treatment to reader's queries. So make an appointment by sending in a fantasy media related question in today.

COMPETITION WINNER

I am writing to thank you for my prize that I won in your recent competition.

I was very glad to find that I had actually won something in my life: The marvellous book, *The Steven Spielberg Story*.

I am a regular reader of *Starburst* and I enjoy it immensely, but please could we have more TV coverage...

Anyway, keep up the good work and the great competitions, because it's not only the winning that's fun but the taking part.

E.M. Coleman,
Dagenham,
Essex.

Glad you liked your prize, E. M. And as for the TV coverage, we think you should find this issue of *Starburst* to your liking!

POT POURRI

It's marvellous, isn't it? Television moguls have at last woken up to the existence of fantasy/science fiction/horror enthusiasts. BBC2 gives us *The Twilight Zone*, BBC1 offers us a season of British horror films - including a few notable Amicus productions - and Channel Four presents us with *The Worst of Hollywood*. So why am I seething with anger as I sit at the typewriter keys?

The answer is simple - all three series are on three different channels at exactly the same time. Okay, to be honest, I've had no problems yet as far as *The Worst of Hollywood* is concerned - here in Wales we get a different fourth channel (S4C) and the season isn't yet being screened - but for both BBC channels to screen fantasy-related material at exactly the same time seems to me to be the height of idiocy. I've penned a note on the subject to the BBC and I strongly urge other *Starburst* readers to do the same. It's too late to do anything about it now but it could prevent a similar clash in future.

Still on the subject of the BBC, I am reliably informed that Auntie Beeb no longer holds the rights to *The Outer Limits*. So I suppose that means an eventual screening on Channel Four, with half the title sequence missing, commercial breaks and the episodes being shown in the wrong order (just like *The Prisoner*, shown out of sequence because ITC made the episodes available to Channel Four in the wrong order).

A few brief words on *Starburst* 63 now. I couldn't agree more with Paul Butler's views on *Superman III*. It was awful. I've detested Richard Pryor for years, and he ruined the film, aided and abetted by Pamela ("I'm No Dumb Blonde") Stephenson. If that lady thinks that by doing impressions of Sandra Dickinson and generally bending over and flashing her legs she's ever going to be taken seriously as an

Starburst LETTERS

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London W2 4SA.



Especially for reader Graham P. Williams here's a portrait of his favourite blonde, Pamela Stephenson, as she appeared in *Superman III*.

actress, well... I dunno... The special effects were pretty shaky, too. All in all, typical Richard Lester garbage.

Richard Hollis' *Zone* article on *Hammer House of Horror* was about as interesting as reviewing the contents of someone's dustbin. I can only recall one single episode of that series that was even remotely good ("The Silent Scream"). The other episodes were spoilt by terrible casting (Anna Calder-Marshall, Suzanne Danielle, etc) and ludicrous scripts. Barbara Kellerman in *Growing Pains*: "Terence bought it for you in Harrod's. That is a famous department store in London." And the classic line in *Two Faces Of Evil* when Anna Calder-Marshall walks out of a mortuary, having discovered that the mutilated corpse lying on a slab isn't her dead husband after all - "Oh," she laughs, "I'm such a silly billy!" The worst thing about the series, for me at least, was a total lack of atmosphere - something which *Journey To The Unknown* (given a cursory mention in Richard's article)

had plenty of, together with a wonderfully moody title sequence (who else remembers that roller-coaster ride in the deserted funfair?), a good music soundtrack and imaginative casting - Dennis Waterman, Michael Gough, Carol Lynley, Stephanie Powers, David Hedison and Justine Lord appeared in the series. An episode guide would be greatly appreciated, Richard.

In conclusion, I have to say how intrigued I was by the That's Entertainment/Varese Sarabande record currently being advertised by Marvel - particularly with the album of *The Twilight Zone* soundtrack. Does this mean that in due course we may look forward to original soundtracks from such series as *The Outer Limits* and the wonderful Ron Grainer/Albert Elms soundtrack from *The Prisoner*? To the best of my knowledge, neither soundtrack has ever been made available commercially and it would be great if someone could put together an album of the original music from these series. ITC, of course, would probably take a

lot of convincing but again, perhaps a few polite letters to the right people would help. As far as *The Outer Limits* music is concerned, I know that Neil Norman's *Greatest Science Fiction Hits No. 1* (Crescendo Records) is said to include a faithful version of the *Dominique* theme - but an original recording would be greatly appreciated by many, I'm sure.

Graham P. Williams,
Mayhill,
Swansea.

VIDEODROME NASTY?

I'm very pleased to read that *Videodrome* is finally getting a general release in this country this week (third week of November), but what a commotion its release is causing! This was especially noticeable in the fact that the B.B.C. (in all their wisdom!) cancelled three interviews with the delectable Debbie Harry because the producers of the programme involved found the film to be "repulsive", "sick", and "tasteless". I can't comment on what the film is like, not having seen it yet, but I'm sure Ms Harry isn't any of these things. In fact, she seems a very jolly, charming lady.

But I advise people who wish to see *Videodrome* to see it at the cinema if at all possible, because I've a horrible feeling that as soon as it is released on video, some clever MP is going to stamp "nasty" all over it and try to get it banned as soon as possible. I hope this doesn't turn out to be true, but I'm sure you all know the ridiculous state of censorship of all horror films on video at the moment. Did you know that *The Boogeyman*, *Possession*, and Lucio Fulci's *Zombie Flesh Eaters* are all on a list of "obscene" videos? Let's hope the situation doesn't get more out of hand than it is already.

Thanks for listening.

Neil Roberts,
Caerphilly,
S. Wales.

YEAR OF DISAPPOINTMENT

The year is nearly over and films have come and gone, so perhaps it's time to reflect on what sort of year it's been.

I don't know about anyone else but for me it's been a year of disappointments.

This was the year of the trilogies, *Jedi*, *Superman 3*, *Jaws 3*, et al. But more importantly this was the year of the mega-bucketeer. Even more so than last year film companies have been putting huge amounts of money into make-or-break colossus, all hoping for an *E.T.* or *Star Wars*. But it was to sum up the year up, I'd say 1983 was the year that fantasy and sci-fi films left a bad taste in my mouth.

Jed was a huge let-down, *Superman 3* was a damp squib, *Something Wicked* was empty and finally proved that it's impossible to put Bradbury on the

screen. I won't even begin to mention *Octopussy*.

What's left? *Space Hunter*. Well that was all right but with a fourteen million dollar price tag it should have been way, way better. It almost hurts to go on. *The Dark Crystal* was an empty bag of tricks, *Twilight Zone* was one and a half decent stories and the rest a waste of time. In fact, the only game that shines out of this heap of mediocrity are *Android* and *Psycho 2*, both with decent scripts and their hearts in the right place.

Imagination is the key word. All these films have lacked imagination or charm. Production values have taken over from decent dialogue and a decent plot. I love special effects films, but frankly I've had it up to here. I want my grey matter stimulated, please no more hordes of spaceships and monsters – just good, old-fashioned story telling and let the effects take the back-seat for once.



Above: Anthony Perkins as Norman Bates in *Psycho 2*. Below: Sean Connery and Charlotte Rampling in John Boorman's *Zardoz*.

The final disappointment of 1983 is *Blade Runner*. Perhaps I should blame those who reside at Warner Brothers home video. Yes, you've guessed it, not content with hacking fifteen minutes out of the original cinema release, the video folk decided to restore five or so minutes of footage to the U.S. video version but not to the British release. Not only that but Warner's policy of home rental means you can't even buy it in the shops. But even if you could it'd cost somewhere in the region of fifty pounds, whereas in the U.S. it sells for about twenty pounds.

If anything has been proved in 1983 it's the fact that there is an evident lack of desire on the parts of studio executives to allow any sort of fantasy film a modicum of intelligence without millions having to be spent on effects. Dan O'Bannon's adaptations of two of Philip K. Dick's short stories seem to have disappeared. Perhaps there weren't enough spaceships and aliens in them

for the studio heads.

All I ask is this, don't underestimate your audience by appealing to the lowest common denominators.

Mark Burman,
London,
N13

WHITHER ZARDOZ?

It's astounding... *Starburst* is the best magazine of its kind but how can you excuse the fact that you have never run an article on *Zardoz*?

The public deserves to be told about it.

Roger Mitchell,
Penarth,
Wales.

All right we give in. We can't excuse our callous neglect of *Zardoz*. But then there are a lot of movies that *Starburst* hasn't covered yet. Give us time, we'll get to them all eventually.



The Return of **Flickers** by Tim Quinn & Dicky Howett

THIS MONTH WE TAKE A LOOK AT HISTORIC FILM CLIPS LEFT ON THE CUTTING-ROOM FLOOR. FIRST, RETURN OF THE JEDI...

IF DAD WAS A SURPRISE, MAY I MEET MOM!

NEXT, THE CONFRONTATION SCENE FROM THE INVISIBLE MAN VS THE INVISIBLE MARTIAN ARMY.

AND FINALLY, PSYCHO...

WHEN I SAID 'CUT' NORMALLY I MEANT STOP ACTING!

About this time last year, I seem to recall (who has time to check?) reporting on what should have been 1983-D. Didn't really happen, did it? Well, here we are in 1984... for real! Strange to have arrived – intact – at this great metaphor of a year, to have 1984 diaries (and not Big Brother editions), to see 1984 on daily papers, write it on letters and cheques... and yet know that when we look at TV, it is not looking at us, watching us and every movement and possible face-crime or thought crime...

The classic title, originally written out in letters not numerals, has been hanging around in the world's troubled consciousness, forged out of George Orwell's tubercular pessimism, since he dropped such title notions as *The Last Man in Europe*, 1980 and 1982 (don't have the same menacing ring, do they?) and simply turned around the year he was writing, living and close to dying in: 1948.

His classic novel of doom and foreboding about a totalitarian future came out with 250,000 copies in June, 1949. Orwell was dead seven months later on January 21, 1950... by which time close on 400,000 copies of the book had sold. Since when it's never stopped being in print – one American publisher has gone through 65 printings. As Orwell's most famous work (*Animal Farm* inevitably rates second), *1984* has now sold more than 50 million copies in 62 languages.

Although actually arriving here tends to take the edge off that most legendary title, a new British movie of the book is due before the cameras in March. It should be ready for premieres by September as, probably, the grand finale to the great year of Orwell-remembered frenzy of activity (mainly on TV). Now, whether you regard 1984 as fantasy, science fiction (it was in 1949), fantasy-plus or simply an anti-Communism tract, I feel such news deserves pride of place this month.

The new movie has to be better than the last attempt – a lukewarm effort directed in Britain by Michael Anderson in 1956, starring Hollywood Edmond O'Brien and Jan Sterling as a sop to the American backlog involved. (They were supported by a rather better cast including Michael Redgrave, David Kossoff, Mervyn Johns and Donald Pleasance). The Orwell Estate, not surprisingly, didn't think much of the sodsack movie and successfully banned any re-issue of it. And anyway, for the British – or those of a certain age – there was one 1984 only – and that was Peter Cushing's remarkable performance as Orwell's Winston Smith hero in a BBC-TV production in 1954, which shook Britain in much the same way as Orson Welles's *War of the Worlds* had staggered American radio listeners in 1938. "People said it should

Tony Crawley's THINGS TO COME



In 1954 Peter Cushing starred as Winston Smith in the BBC-TV production of 1984, and this year, not surprisingly, a new cinema version of Orwell's classic is planned.

never have been shown," recalls Cushing.

I have high hopes for the new cinema version. It rests in the safe grasp of the team responsible for *Another Place, Another Place* – producer Simon Perry and writer-director Michael Radford. They've been selected for the (not easy) job by the man who holds all the media rights of this timely venture, a Chicago lawyer who has been mentioned here before: Marvin Rosenblum. He first optioned the rights three years ago from the (now dead) widow of Orwell – Sonia Brownell, the beautiful literary editor who married the dying author in a bedside ceremony three months before he succumbed to tuberculosis.

1984 – The Book

"I'm not pleased with it," Orwell wrote to his publisher... "a good idea ruined." He remained alone in that view. If you haven't read it, you should. Even if you haven't read it, you've probably used the title to sum up feelings about your boss, your family's attitude to late nights out, the government, the local football manager or whatever. 1984 has become shorthand for one kind of oppressive state or another... and various of Orwell's futuristic terminology (Newspeak,

Doubtthink... even Orwellian) has long been in modern usage, never mind being a daily fact in Iron-Curtained territories.

He created the chilling ultimate in totalitarian states – Oceania, constantly at war with Eurasia and Eastasia because war keeps the population subservient and makes prosperity impossible – and thereby, leisure, above all, personal thought, as well. Oceania is ruled – not to say, controlled – by a dictator, given the misleading title of Big Brother. But then nothing means what it did anymore. "84. 'War is Peace,' say Oceania's slogans. 'Freedom is Slavery.' And, perhaps most familiar of all, bearing in mind governments' information (or lack of it) in the Vietnam, Falklands and Grenada incursions, not forgetting Russia and the Korean airline, 'Ignorance is Strength.'

Everyone in Oceania has a TV set – which works both ways. You watch it. It watches you. Hence, the other famous slogan: Big Brother is Watching You. When the book's timid hero thinks, "Down with Big Brother!" he has committed what's known as a thought-crime. To be caught by the spy-screen making the wrong expression during some portentous announcement, is a face-crime. Such is life, circa 1984. Orwell's hero, Winston Smith – one

of Peter Cushing's finest roles; not Edmund O'Brien's best – works at the Ministry of Truth. Another misnomer. His job is re-writing history. Changing yesterday's newspapers to conform with today's ideology; and, as happens often enough in Russia, simply obliterating all mentions of people no longer in current or historical favour. They just never existed. They become non-persons. Smith uses Newspeak, a form of English so cut-down to essentials that it makes unorthodox opinions impossible.

Winston's rebellion is to fall in love – sexual desire being banned, unless you happen to be one of the state's underbelly, the proletariat; or in Orwellian, the proles. (The race continues via artsem, newspeak for artificial insemination). Winston and Julie are caught by the Thought Police (I) and taken to the Ministry of Love (hah!) for brain-washing. Main torture there is in Room 101 – which terrified those viewers in 1954.

In Room 101, you face your own worst fears (such as watching Edmund O'Brien in 1954). In Winston's case, he's scared of rats. As a caged rat is shoved at him, he breaks... begs for the rat to be aimed at his lover. And so, he's cured. He's become a good, totally subservient, no-questions-asked, no thoughtcrimes committed party member. End.

• Gloom? Of course it's gloomy! Orwell was dying as he wrote it – as, or so he said, a satire. As such, it ranks with the best of Jonathan Swift (Orwell's own favourite book was *Gulliver's Travels*). However, Orwell, born Eric Arthur Blair in Bengal, chose Orwell from the river and George for sheer ordinariness! His book was misunderstood. It was never an attack on British Socialism (then in power) but of the kind of perversions liable in a centralised economy, as was happening in Communist and Fascist nations.

"I do not believe," said Orwell, "that the kind of society I describe necessarily will arrive, but I believe... that something resembling it could arrive."

He also said something else well worth remembering in this, his year. "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear." As I say, read the book – then, see the film. It should be difficult to top it as the literal frightening of the year.

(For John Brosnan's thoughts on the arrival of 1984, turn to page 43 in this issue – Editor.)

Thought-Crimes!

And now here's a real, 100% genuine, 1984-style thought-crime... That alleged film-maker from Spain, Juan Piquer has announced five new films. I've never forgiven Piquer for a really rotten superhero movie cashing in on Supie some years back and called *Captain Electric* (aka, *Supersonic Man*).

believe me, there is not juan worse film-maker around than this Juan; he makes that other Spanish "film-maker", Jacinto Molina aka. Paul Naschy, seem a genius in comparison.

Well, in shooting order, Piquer's line-up is: *Phenomena*, maybe with Peter Cushing, although having suffered Piquer once must have been enough of a test; *Winston Smith* (or Peter, *Black Angel*; *The Curse of the Pharaohs* (may it fall on his head); *Dune Empire* (how close to *Dune* can you get and stay out of court?); and last and definitely least (budget-wise anyway; just, in fact, like last time), the threatened return of... *Captain Electric* and *The Spider Woman*. Maybe Marvel Comics can put the block on that one... please!

The safest prophecy I can make for the year is that none of these films will be any good – not even in *Newspeak* reviews.

Sign Of The Times?

Whether it's because we've caught up with the fantasy-year of 1984 or not, I notice that in Embassy Pictures' huge 21-film programme (of Bertrand's *Red Harvest*, *A Chorus Line*, *The FBI Story* (again!) and biopics of Legs Diamond, photographer Robert Capa and a meeting of Tom Mix and Pancho Villa) there is not one *st* subject to be found. Oh, they've signed up some of our directors – Richard Marquand for *The Capa Story*, John Boorman for *Emerald Forest*, Robert Wise for *Death in the Desert* – but the nearest any of the Embassy projects get to even fantasy is in *Heaven Sent*, a kind of updating of Peter Ustinov's *Vive-Versa* (1947), in which a youth-time-slips back into the youth of his parents. Herb Ross is handling that one. You know him... the well-known fantasy director of such films as *The Goodbye Girl*, *Mystique* and, well, all right, Herb also made *Play It Again, Sam* and *The Seven Per Cent Solution*.

E.T. II

More cheering news for the unfolding year of *Newspeak*... Steven Spielberg is, apparently, eager to start making *E.T. 7.0* this year, after all. For release in the summer of '85, that means: He also wants to make the movie over here at Elstree studios. At least, that's one whisper I hear. Doesn't matter where he goes, the poor guy is not going to have much peace and quiet whenever he shoots it.

E.T. III

Meanwhile, the West Germans are bending over backwards to match the Spielberg magic touch of blending science fantasy and kids – with *The Never Ending Story* and the upcoming *Momo* venture. And, one more. Producer Frank Seitz has latched on to a Henry Winterfeld book which Seitz claims is a novel which inspired 40% of *E.T.* (and haven't we heard that before). The



THE PRIMEVALS

EMPIRE PICTURES presents "THE PRIMEVALS" From an Original Story by DAVID ALLEN. Directed by DAVID ALLEN. Produced by RANDALL DODD. Executive Producer KATHY CLARK. Production Designer DAVID HARRIS. Music by LINDA PANTER. Special Visual Effects by DAVID ALLEN. Director of Photography DAVID ALLEN. Cinematography DAVID ALLEN. Special Effects DAVID ALLEN. Directed by DAVID ALLEN. Directed by DAVID ALLEN.

After years of planning it looks as though this film will eventually be made, with stop-motion effects by David Allen.

title? *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky*. Sounds like the other 60% could be fun!

Dick Docked

John Landis was going to make it. Warren Beatty got interested, when Landis left, Walter Hill stepped in – and the Beatty talk went on. Then, Beatty stepped out of the action – as he keeps on doing of late (Michael Keaton has just replaced him in *The Slugger's Wife*). Now, Hill and his team have split. And that seemed to be the end of the big, bravura *Dick Tracy* film... until the united powers that be at Universal and Paramount went script and cap in hand to *My Favourite Year's* director, ex-actor Richard Benjamin. The problem, I gather, is more than just two-way wrist-watch radios.

Hercules II

While giggling through *Hercules* at the recent Brussels fantasy fest, I wondered whatever happened to the second Luigi Cozzi-Lou Ferrigno-Sybil Danning exploit, *Hercules* and *The Seven Magnificent Gladiators*. They were filmed back-to-back in the summer of '82, so if one's cut, where's the other?

In immense trouble, I later found out in Paris. In fact, it doesn't exist anymore. It's become (or becoming, with a lot of French talk) *Hercules X*, in a cross-cris of footage from both films. The trouble came in the ineffective

effects of Cozzi's one-time close chum, Armando Valcavada. One could say the same for the trouble in the first endeavour. At Brussels, I saw Branian effects that were superior to his work. But then, Valcavada is to SPFX what Cozzi is to directing.

As the movie could never be released with such bad effects, Cozzi called up a young French film-maker, whose shorts had impressed him, and asked him to bail out the film. Jean-Manuel Costa and his brother, Alain, are now rotoscoping and stop-motioning like mad in Paris and rushing finished scenes back to Rome twice a month. The work could take them until April. Well, it ain't easy, attempting to provide effects – particularly, stop-motion modelwork – for sequences shot two years ago without enough thought to future effects, never mind being shot without recourse to the guys now doing those effects.

Actually, I do hear tell that Cozzi wanted Costa working on the first film. Luigi called a certain fantasy magazine editor in Paris for Jean-Manuel's number... and was shunted off to a company the said editor had a finger or two in, instead. (Imagine that happening at Starburst!) The Costas are pals of mine and another French SPFX mate, Pascal Pintosu (*Trumbulls' Interview* in *SB 86*), has joined them, as usual. He created a disfigured head for some poor actress who gets all fired up about her part in a flaming scene. No truth in the rumour that Pascal modelled his head upon that of a certain fantasy

magazine editor in town...

The names of these French effects wizards may well be new to you. Not my fault! I've written about their stunning featurette work and Alan is awaiting room for the articles. Maybe now that Jean-Manuel, Alain and Pascal have moved from shorts to Cannon's long-johns, could save Cannon's bacon and win extra work because of it, he'll find the space – hope so. They're good guys and about the only SPFX specialists in France. Besides, we don't want French fantasy mag editors inferring bad things about British Fantasy mag editors.

One Man Band

Not so sure what's happened to director Charles Band's plans for his segmented thriller, *Journeys Through The Dark Zone*, which I reported on from Cannes last year... I do hope to have some news on that next month. Meanwhile, Charlie is off and running with his *Metalstorm* star, Jeffrey Byron, in *Rapewar* – yet another of Band's two-words-in-one titles. Oh, it has a subtitle too: *The Challenges of Excalibur*... so there! Handsome Jeff is the hero, to be sure, with Richard Moll on the side of the demons... and some actor known as W.A.S.P. As per usual for Band, Mac Ahlberg is the cinematographer, with Doug White in charge of the special make-up effects. Script, by the way, is by one Alan Actor... I know his sister, Audrey Actress.

3D-Kill

About a month after it started ragewar-ing, Charlie Band's Empire Internationale combine started rolling with the long-announced *Swordkil*! ice-bound fantasy. That's the one in which a samurai warrior is de-frosted after 300 years in some Arctic fridge. J. Larry Carroll is helming this one, with Mac Ahlberg again on camera – but it's no longer in 3-D, I notice. So much for Charlie's high praise of his own 3-D system last May. Some old tri-di bubble has burst... until Spielberg and Scorsese show how to use it, perhaps, in *Little Shop of Horrors*?

Prime Evil?

And the next biggie from Band and Co will be *The Primevals* from an original story and, naturally, all special visual effects, by David Allen. From the information so far given out (not much, I assure you), this looks like a re-run of *Swordkil* except it's a veritable King Kong coming out of the freezer on some far distant planet. David Allen, of course, is a past master of stop-motion monsters – and he'll be co-directing these ones with Charlie.

Maybe that's what happened to *Dark Zone*. Band, you might recall, wanted seven different effects aces working on the varying segments of that project. Seems they all came up with ideas for complete features instead...

Tony Crawley's THINGS TO COME

Who's Zoo?

From the galaxies, yes, but not from frozen wastes, comes the various endangered species of outer-space creatures in *Zoo Ship*. All goes well with the collection of such alien animals in Richard Shorr's new movie until, well, you're ahead of me, right...? One of the ships crashes on Earth and spits its frightening cargo. How did Charlie Band let this one get away...?

Director Shorr, his editor wife Catherine and effects man Sydney Dutton created the yarn. Brian Penitikas is in charge of the prosthetics but when it comes to creating such inter-galactic zoological creatures – in a film expensive enough to star James Whitmore, Craig (Ghost Story) Wasson and Roddy McDowell – who else would be in charge but the legendary Jim Danforth.

McMemo

From Tony to His Editorship: You have rave, the one, the only P.J. Soles, has completed a new down-under shocker from Long Weekend's director, Colin Eggleston. *Innocent Prey*, they call it. Also in the otherwise Aussie cast is Psycho's detective, Martin Balsam (And the girl you always muddle P.J. with, Jamie Lee Curtis, says she's a maverick, crazy, alcoholic-gardener's daughter who takes over a demolition derby" in Grandview U.S.A. from Randal Kleiser). (And all this "cos I once miscaptioned" P.J. Soles as Jamie Lee way back in Starburst 20 or thereabouts – Editor.)

Romero Treat

Moving into Carpenter country, George Romero pulled off a delightful Halloween TV-special in America called *Trick Or Treat*. Actually, it should have been titled *A Halloween Tale*, as George's script was warmed-over Dickens about a Scrooge-type getting his come-uppance at the old witching hour...

As mentioned here before, the film was a half-hour pilot for a series Romero is planning to kick off later this autumn under the umbrella handle of *Tales From The Darkside*. Stateside TV critics warmly received the pilot in terms not normally used for such test ventures. Just the right mix of the old Hitchcock and *Twilight Zone* shows was the general opinion.

Bernard Hughes played the meanie-baiting kids into his house on Halloween and telling them of they could locate his bag of IOU's their families' debts would be wiped of the slate.

Except, he's rigged his home into something of a Ghost Train ride, scaring the hell out of the kids – and doubtless, some of the audience. Last knock on the front door, though, came from a ghoulish witch figure (Frances Chaney) and Mr Gideon Hockles, he of the line "never listen to your heart... nothing is as powerful as money," was soon having his hackles raised.

Director of the piece – come on Aunty or Channel Four, snap it up! – was actor Bob Balaban, Truffaut's translator in *Close Encounters* and Bill Hurt's scientific partner in *Aliens*. He's learned well from the likes of Spielberg and Ken Russell, has Bob. As the first director hired by Romero in his producer guise, Bob should be odds on for one of George's movie productions this year, like *The Sisterhood*, *Mayday*, *The Match* or even *Creakshaw II*.

Paul-ez Français?

The French film combine which beckoned, for example, the new movie of the country's most popular star, Yves Montand, is now tending the latest work of Paul Morrissey – the director of Andy Warhol's *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* capers. At times, he's the most innovative or boring film-maker around, but certainly the wildest interview on the block. Paul's futuristic project is *Alphabet City* which will have Mrs Whitehouse and the other anti-nasties up in arms before you know it. How's that Paul? "In *Alphabet City*," he says, "if you are fourteen... you can kill who you want..." *Clockwork* *Man*-davines perhaps? Despite the budget of francs, shooting is in action now in New York.

Dungeon Doings

British writer Tony Sheer has won New Line Cinema Corporation's biggest budget for his script, *The Road of the Dungeon Master*. New Line, which released *Xtro* in America, has reserved \$8 million for the movie to be shot in Europe from April – with James Glickenhaus helming.

New Name Dept

Italy's Lucio Fulci – now shooting *Murder Rock* – has a new monicker on the English import prints of his *Seven Doors of Death* movie. The credit reads: Directed by Louis Fuller. But then the film also carries a 1986 copyright according to the Latin numerals. In such circumstances, David Warbeck must be relieved he's not billed as Daddy Warbucks.

Dead's Living

Producer Tom Fox has got his publicity – and lost his director. So he's thrown in the towel and what would have been Tope Hooper's *Return of the Living Dead* – until George Romero yelled, remarkably politely, foul! – has now promoted its scripter and become Dan

O'Bannon's *Return of the Dead*. It's Dan's first big feature and if that one goes wrong, he really cannot blame the director when the movie opens in July. Shooting started on November 21 1983 and, as with all our friends, we wish Dan-the-man lotsa luck. (Just remember to send us the stills, okay Dan?)

The Late Umberto

Also cashing in on all the Fox/Romero headlines in Umberto Lenzi's *Nightmare City* (1980), a Spanish-Italian horror, picked up by something called 21st Century Distribution in the United States and rapidly re-titled, *City of the Walking Dead*... which makes it sound like Luxembourg, France, Italy, Belgium, Holland or West Germany after a visitation by English football fans. The stars remained the same as before (Hugo Stiglitz, Laura Trotter and Mel Ferrer) and the plot still meanders between *Chinatown* and any of Romero's zombie pieces. Makes me wonder what the re-titling crowd can come up with next... *The Running, Jumping And Standing Still Dead*?

No, more like another 1980 slice of Lenzi originally known as *Cannibal Ferox* and now is U.S. cinemas, and so I understand, on U.K. video-nasties, as *Make Them Die Slowly*. By any standard's *It's* a gruesome piece as apparently separate stories about in Columbus and New York merge or otherwise collide head-on.

Vid-Goodies

There's a quite extraordinary state of affairs happening to *WarGames* on cassette in America. Vid-companies as we all know from the hype, work hard and spend a lot of money in buying exclusive video rights to films. Somehow, *WarGames* is available – over

clever (and presumably, union member?) editor who pieced together the compilation of imported videos' nastiest moments to shock MPs and the like with. And if, indeed, due payment was made to the owners of these films for infringing, one might say, pirating their footage.

Like my fellow *Starburst*-era, I'm neither for nor against the kind of sick schlock that has all these righteous folks in such a tizzy. I'm more in favour of that which they, apparently, are not. And that's a little something called personal liberty... freedom of the individual. I wonder, for instance, what some of our MPs might make of a video-compilation being made of all their broken promises, gaffes (not to mention downright lies) made in speeches over the last couple of years. "But," they'd stammer, "these scenes are out of context."

Exactly. Any more censorship by this, or any other government, has to be fought. Otherwise, the "authorities" and the self-appointed watch-dogs will select what films... TV shows... record albums... newspapers... magazines, dammit – we have the access to.

End of speech. (Excuse me).

Vid-Besties

It may rest still at No 6 in the cinema's top ten but *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is now the No 1 best-selling video-cassette of all. In a business where 25,000 sales equals a gold cassette (it's the money not the units that has to add up to a million), and where the previous best-sellers (Jane Fonda's *Workout* and the movie version, *Flashdance*) racked up sales of around 200,000, Indy's 420,000 copies is devastating. It helped a lot that Indy was on one label and sold at Paramount's



standardized cheaper price structure – which tends to please fans, rather than confuse them.

It's much the same story from Britain, where orders for the first *Indiana Jones* venture (which, very cleverly, has a preview for the next, *Temple of Doom*, tacked on the end of it) has outsold anything else on the market, three to five-fold.

Having tested the market with a lower price for *Officer And A Gentleman* (selling for five cents under \$40 instead

of the regular five cents under \$60 or \$70, Paramount did the same with *Star Trek II* and *Flashdance*. We owe the combine our thanks, as other companies are now forced to follow suit. Over Christmas, over yonder, you could buy the entire *Jaws* trilogy on tape for as much as such dross as *Space Hunter* and *Yor*. Cor! it's the only way the vid-tycoons can win over the fans who, naturally, prefer to rent films than buy 'em. These days, video shops rent about a hundred cassettes for every one sold. Lower the price, and we'll all buy, right?

Where There's Ferrer . . .

While Mel Ferrer, at 68, must still be wondering, on his *Falcon Crest* soapy set, what on earth he was doing in the above-mentioned *Walking Dead* film — José Ferrer, at 71 and no relation, must feel the same about another 1980 horrorshow finally escaping . . . This is Jackie Kong's *The Thing* (ex-Easter Sunday), produced by ex-porno-maker Bill Coco, and featuring Space 1999's Martin Landau, Dorothy (Peyton Place) Malone and Ruth (Laugh-In) Buzzi. The buzz being (supposedly) that such (momentary) names might help seal the gaping holes in the credibility department. (They never do, of course). As title suggests, this is one of those mutant monster movies. Very little of the creature gets to be seen. Or of the film, for that matter. Its greatest asset is its uncommon brevity — just 79 minutes.

Oh yes, it also features the first double-X actor I've heard of. This is a fella by the name, no kidding, of Rexx Coltrane.

Flashprances

Did you know that the Connery-Bond title singer, Lani Hall, is Mrs Herb Alpert? You did. Well, I didn't . . . Big Richard Kiel, not seen much since he left *Bondanza* with *Moondraiser*, is shooting (literally) some gangster comedy called *The Backsiders* . . . Psycho II's cute Meg Tilley (much better in *The Big Chill*, but then isn't everyone?) headlines *Impulse* in San Francisco. . . Paul Bartel's newie is *Not For Publication*, but his cast is — Mrs DePalma aka, Nancy Allen and that American Werewolf, David Naughton. . . Move over Arnold, Lou and yes, you, too, Sylvester, Australian heavyweight Anthony Hamilton has won the male lead in the *Samson and Delilah* re-tread . . . Sybil Danning is *Playing With Fire* with Eric Brown getting singed. Lucky him . . . Christopher Lee introducing a new series from Britannia TV at Pinewood, *Archives of Evil* . . . Sigourney Weaver trying comedy with Dan Aykroyd and Bill Murray as *Ghost Busters* . . . Simon MacCorkindale's *Manimal* TV show being re-tasted, although doing fair enough in the ratings game . . . Leonard Nimoy finished shooting *Star Trek IV* — oh, all right then, *The Search*

For Spock — on October 21, since when the film has been in the hands, hearts and minds of ILM . . . Cannon's *Golan and Glotob* aren't the only Israeli filmmakers around. Rolls Films' Israel Riegel is preparing a fantasy thriller, *Eagle Over The Dead Sea*. He calls it a Jaws of the skies.

Felix's Father

Old age and a heart attack robbed us of another pioneer animator late last year with the death of Otto Messmer. He was the father of Felix the Cat, probably the screen's first international (and E.T.-style merchandising) hero. Pause for readers' outcry . . . okay, you finished now? Yes, yes, I know most reference books (even the usually reliable Ephraim Katz to me) will tell you that Felix was Pat Sullivan's creation. Well, the books are wrong!

Otto Messmer, born as he died (aged 91) in New Jersey, dreamt up the fun feline in 1919, when working for the Australian-born New York producer, Pat Sullivan. Otto simply signed his work in the 'boss', or indeed, the studio's name. His Felix kept on walking tall (winning praise from such intellectuals as Aldous Huxley) until the arrival of a certain mouse and sound. Even then, Otto (who'd started out in movies as a painter of scenery) brought his indestructible cat back as a newspaper strip in 1924 — and drew him, daily, for the next 27 years. That's a strip record beaten only by Snoopy and Co. Felix is alive still — in some 16 hours of videos being made by Alan Enterprises of Los Angeles for 15 countries, including the Intervision label in Britain.

There is something mighty wrong with the film world, though, when one has to wait for an artist's death to put the record straight. I trust the next editions of Katz's movie encyclopaedia — and obviously, the more faulty Haliwell's *Filmgoers' Companion* — will note my comments and find room to honour Otto and alter their erroneous guff about Pat Sullivan.

Quote Of The Month

Commenting, I presume, more on his fight to beat deafness and therefore speech in order to have as much dialogue as everyone else in his *Trauma* Centre tv series (and not, on his Italian thud 'n' blunder *Hercules* movies?) Lou Ferrigno declares: "We're all handicapped — some more noticeably than others."

Old Pals' Act

George Lucas pals, Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz — the American Graffiti and *Raiders* II scripters — have won funds from the *Raiders*' backers, Paramount, for their new movie. Willard is directing this one, *Best Defense*, which matches Dudley Moore and the '83 find, Eddie Murphy with Indiana Jones' latest girlfriend, Kate Capshaw. Katz's previous fantasy, *Dreamscape*, is still awaiting

its release (maybe they're waiting for *Temple of Doom* to make her a star). Our cuddly Dud needs a hit again, of course, so no wonder he's working with Eddie. Everyone's trying to, including Sylvester Stallone in Eddie's next outing. The comedy, produced by Gloria, by the way, is being shot in Los Angeles and Israel.

Regular As . . .

Well, almost as regular as Christmas, John Carpenter's long-promised (even longer written) Western, *El Diablo*, shows up again on the new year's schedules from Thorn-EMI. I should think it's a case of this year, now or never.

Oh yeah, and sorry to have to tell you this, but one other 1984 treat (?) is going to be . . . *Friday The 13th Part 4*. Collapses of columnist . . .

Black Is . . . Alien?

Black actors are few in space films. Billy Dee Williams, of course, and Richard Pryor, though it's best to forget his muscling into *Superman III*. But where's the first black star role? In Sinatra's old birthplace of Hoboken, New Jersey, in fact. His name is Joe Morton. He's a New York soap actor, like Chris Revere before him. And he's the mute alien in a fun sf film called, well what else but . . . *The Brother From Another Planet*. It was made for a paltry \$350,000. Or about one-hundred times less than a *Supie* movie.

Sounds too quirky . . . cheap? Forget it! The movie is written and directed by John Sayles — the super-talented Hobokenian who subsidizes his stunning independent movies (like *Lianne*

by scripting such films as *Prenha*, *Alligator*, *The Howling*, *Battle Beyond The Stars*. And it was Sayles, of course, that Spielberg turned to for the *Night Shifts* scenario which eventually transformed (via John's final scenes) into *E.T.* John is the brightest scripter around. Yes, even better than Larry Kasdan. After all, Larry's new hit, *The Big Chill* is, after all, something of a re-make of John's first home-made hit, *The Return of the Secaucus Seven*. And I wouldn't be surprised to see Eddie Murphy making a re-run of *The Brother From Another Planet* by this time next year!

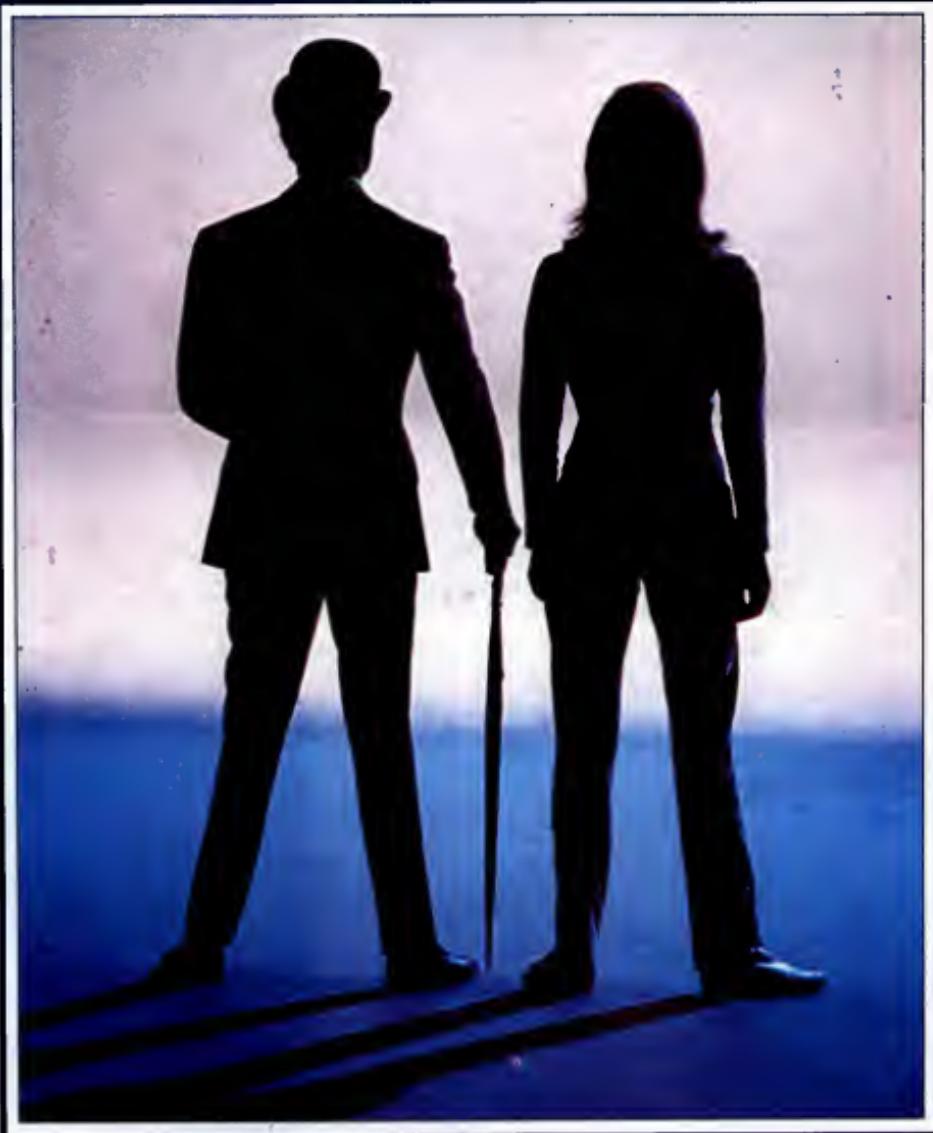
Until now, John has written fantasy and directed reality. He once explained this *Jekyll and Hyde* side by telling me, "I was lucky being able to write these movies and not direct them. I got the most fun which is writing the scripts. I didn't have to deal with the negative aspects — the little budget and time they had. Directing movies ideally takes a year out of your life . . . writing takes three or four weeks."

He directed his first fantasy, acts in it as well (as in *Lianne*, etc) and in fact, paid for it out of his own pocket, while bidding time to raise the \$2m he needs for his dream movie, *Matewan*, a 1920s union drama — far removed in depth and history from this tale of a black E.T. slave, fleeing his planet, crashing his rocket on Elba Island and getting involved in Harlem's drug world. I could go on and on about John — who looks like a Clint Eastwood clone — but I know Alan Jones caught up with him more recently than me. Watch out for Mr Jones' interview with Sayles, coming soon to a *Starburst* near you!



Facing page: *WarGames*, the film that is available on video on three different labels! Above: Richard Pryor horsing around in *Superman III*.

The Best
of
BRITISH TELE-FANTASY



Patrick Macnee ON



THE AVENGERS

It was sometime during the early 40s when Patrick Macnee was first acclaimed for his acting abilities. Theatre critic Harold Hobson commended the young thespian for his "striking" reading of five lines in the play, *The White Devil*. And the words that won the actor his first positive notice? "This is not true, madame!"

Born in London in 1922, into what the actor calls "a socially privileged background", Macnee found his early career influences torn between the world of horse racing, in which he had no interest and in which his father, trainer "Shrimp" Macnee, worked and public school where he first developed an interest in acting. After five years at Eton, young Patrick spent some time visiting racecourses with his father until a run of bad luck at the track caused the family finances to dwindle.

On the advice of actress Margaret Rawlings, he applied to the Webber-Douglas drama school in South Kensington where he won a scholarship but, as he recalls, "Not because of any special merit but because the war had taken so many of the younger men." But the stint at drama school lasted only a short time when he decided to go into repertory, where he not only found a variety of roles but also met his first wife, Barbara Douglas, during a run of *Little Women*.

In 1941 he joined the navy and was stationed at the 8th Gunboat Flotilla at

Dartmouth. Following his discharge in 1947 he returned to the theatre, finding an abundance of work (including the provident *The White Devil*) although not enough to support his family, which now had an additional two members—a son, Rupert and daughter, Jennie.

Drawn by the more lucrative rewards of the film world, Macnee took up the option of bit-parts in various features, including Olivier's *Hamlet*, *The Elusive Pimpernel* and *The Fatal Night*. He then took up the offer of a friend, director David Greene, to go to Canada and work in television "to earn the absolute fortune of \$100 a week."

The next eight years were spent building up a successful career in Canadian TV, although the station he worked for was limited to the Toronto area. Nevertheless, Macnee did get to work with several well-known actors—including Christopher Plummer, Kata Reid and Lorne Greene.

Then followed a year acting in various parts of the United States, including New York, where he worked with director George Roy Hill, among others, in the early days of live television. "Our famous one was a version of *A Night to Remember*, which was about the sinking of the Titanic. I played the designer in that. That was in 1956, and we did it live. We made the Titanic go down in a fish tank!" Macnee would have a later brush with a



Left, top to bottom: On the trail of Aliens, from *Outer Space*, Steed searches the apartment of alien-turned-astrophysicist, Majorier Whitehead (John P. Keeley) in *From Venus With Love*. Steed and Cathy (Glynis Johns) discuss latest alien invasion in *Aliens*. Steed arrives at the surface of the planet Negative Man.



Left: Steed (Patrick Macnee) and Emma (Diane Rigg) after their shocking encounter with The Positive-Negative Man, a crazed villain who stores electricity in his body and kills by merely touching his victims. Above: Steed to the rescue! The debonair agent tangles with the crazed doctor Pringle and his henchmen Martin, in *From Venus With Love*.



Patrick Macnee as Steed in a red tuxedo, standing in a room with a black chair and a framed picture on the wall. Opposite top: Steed and Mrs. Peel (Diana Rigg) in a scene from *The Avengers*. Opposite bottom: Steed and Mrs. Gale (Honor Blackman) in a scene from *The Avengers*.



doomed vessel when he appeared in *The Twilight Zone* episode, "Judgement Night."

After roles in episodes of *Playhouse 90* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, he returned to England but found it difficult to find acting work. "I took a job with Edgar Peterson, a producer I'd known in America. He was in England producing a series about Sir Winston Churchill and was making it like a Western, which didn't please the English too much! I became his associate producer and we interviewed everybody from Mountbatten to Churchill's cook and parlour maid."

"Edgar Peterson sent a telegram to Richard Rogers, who was a chief shareholder in ABC (the company which made the series) which said, 'Too much music!' Rogers sent back a wire and fired him! I was left all on my own, with John Schlesinger, who was unknown at the time, helping me. We made a lovely, 26 part series called *The Valiant Years*."

While searching for more production work, Macnee was contacted by Sydney Newman, a British TV executive and co-creator of *Doctor Who*. "He asked me if I would like to help him out for a few months in a series, which was more or less the continuation of something else — *Police Surgeon*, with Ian Hendry." Macnee initially declined on the basis that he was now a producer rather than an actor, but later, "I asked for an outrageous sum of money, which they gave me." And so *The Avengers* was born.

The format for the show was a simple one involving the girlfriend of the Hendry character being gunned down in the street, leading him to avenge her death by hunting down the world's criminals. The girlfriend was played by Catherine Woodville, who later became Macnee's second wife — a marriage that was short-lived as several months later she moved to California and remarried.

Hendry and Macnee developed the character of John Steed over the first series of the show. "We took the ordinary cops and robbers theme and turned it upside down. For a long while it wasn't really made clear whether Steed was a goodie or a baddie. Peter Hammond, the director, gave it immense imagination. He used a stylized and Germanic technique that gave a strange, odd, Fritz Lang effect."

After the initial nine months, Hendry left the series and Sydney Newman came up with the idea of Cathy Gale — a female equivalent of John Steed. Played by Honor Blackman, the character was inspired by a combination of the late Margaret Bourke White (a *Life* magazine photographer) and anthropologist Margaret Mead. The idea was to have a strong, independent character who was something more than a wife, secretary or sex symbol, although there would be those who would argue that the latter was a serious consideration!

According to Macnee, the character of Steed was based on three people: *The Scarlet Pimpernel* as portrayed by Leslie Howard, a character played by the late Ralph Richardson in the 1936 feature *O Planes*, and his own father. In developing Steed, Macnee designed all his own clothes and furnished him with exceedingly good manners, drawn from his own background. He also had a hand in the creation of Cathy Gale. As he recalls, "I suggested to Honor Blackman that she dress Cathy in black leather, using the expression 'kinky.' But at that time I honestly didn't know I was hit-sitting on a well-known subterranean deviation."

After two years, Blackman left *The Avengers* to become a James Bond girl — Pussy Galore, *Goldfinger*. This left a gap and as Macnee recalls, "It took them ages to find somebody else and, when they finally did, they fired her shortly thereafter. She was

too womanly. She had a big rear . . . Well, it should have been the other way around, with big . . . shoulders! You had to be a hermaphrodite to be on *The Avengers*!"

A trial episode was shot with first choice, Elizabeth Shepherd, but when she proved physically unsuitable for the role, further screen tests were carried out. "Eventually, they chose Diana Rigg. The two of us just clicked, and it worked. When Diana took over from Honor Blackman, she was given the most frightful reviews. Now she's one of the great actresses of the world. After I'd been working with Diana for about five episodes, my agent asked if they didn't think they should give me a share of the profits. They said, 'Share of the profits? No, he's out. We'll get a younger and better man.' We were all very insecure in those days. Anyway, we finally agreed on two and a half percent of the profits, which I think over the years has garnered me maybe a little more than \$5000! But the show became sort of a cult."

One of the greatest attributes of the Macnee/Rigg *Avengers* was the relationship between their characters. As Macnee recalls, "She was wonderful to work with and we shared a mutual obsession for detail. We deliberately set out to contrive a new and different relationship from the one I had shared with Cathy Gale. We used a sort of shorthand in our communication and we evolved a style of playing two-handed scenes for comedy. We put Emma and Steed in routine situations, like having a meal or playing a game of chess. They would casually discuss some mastermind's plan to rule the world at the same time as serving the soup!"

The question of a possible sexual relationship between Steed and his female partners was often a point of some controversy. "We took the sex relationship for granted. By the mid-60s, the Pill was part of life, so it was accepted that Emma and Steed slept together, but we simply didn't dwell on it. Because we didn't have to bother about sex, we could get on with the plot."

Oddly enough, Macnee disagrees with the general opinion that *The Avengers* is an example of good writing and clever dialogue. "There was no good writing, there was no clever dialogue. (D) Rigg and I used to write all our own scenes because it was so badly written. They were written as rather ordinary thrillers, to be honest. The writers chose very clever topics, like having a robot man way before people thought of robots, etc."

"But what we really did, and I say 'we' advisedly, was to see what would happen if we took these perfectly straight stories and then made them ever so slightly ludicrous—because we thought that life was ludicrous anyway, which it is! To stay alive at all, you have to be slightly mad—but you also had to be basically cool. We used that, we tilted it a bit, we made it funny, and the show worked."

Macnee also has his own theory as to what made *The Avengers* such a success. "The only reason it became successful I think, is because it was different, although it wasn't that great. Also, the women were representative, in a comic strip sort of form, of women coming into their own. It was also very stylishly directed and the people who worked on it happened to be extraordinary. All those people contrived to make a show that was way ahead of its time. Of course, it's been imitated to death ever since."

In 1967, Linda Thorson replaced Diana Rigg. For the next 30 episodes she partnered Macnee, as Tara King—the black leather cat suits were gone but the toughness wasn't. In 1969 *The Avengers* came to an end.

Following the last episode, Macnee left to settle in California. He also toured Australia and New Zealand in a production of *The*



Secretary Bird. On returning to the United States he commenced a sixteen month run in the Broadway production of *Siouxsie*. "I believe *Siouxsie* was my personal turning point as an actor. I think it made me stronger. For the first time in years, I realised I could do more than lift a bowler and dash about as Steed."

In 1976, Patrick Macnee agreed to return to the character of John Steed in *The New Avengers*, although in this variation he was partnered not only a beautiful woman but also another male operative, played by Gareth Hunt. The series lacked much of the verve and inventiveness of the original, although Steed was his usual urbane self and Purdey (Joanne Lumley) managed to build something of a cult following. The new show, backed by French money, ran for two seasons with later episodes being made completely in Canada.

Since the demise of *The Avengers*, both old and new, Patrick Macnee, like so many actors who have become strongly associated with one character, has found it difficult to be considered for other roles. "I lost a part in the *Mississippi* TV series because of it. A director, who had directed me in 15 *Avengers* episodes, said, 'Oh no, we can't have Macnee, he's too identified with *The Avengers*!'"

More recently, Macnee has been involved in a half hour situation comedy for American TV, called *Empire*. He appears in six episodes of the show, playing the head of a company in a Watergate-type spoof. He has also appeared in several features over the last few years, although he views them somewhat negatively—with one exception—*Joe Dante's The Howling*, in which he played a werewolf/psychiatrist. "Television, I view as a living, moving . . . that I am in, if you take the titles and the type of them, except for *The Howling*, have been mostly unreleased. But I made them purely because somebody offered them to me. The inception of cable

(TV) infects one's dreadful movies upon one!"

Although Macnee is also experienced on the production side, it's not an area that particularly excites him today. "I did it once on a unique project. I don't want to do that. I'm just an actor. If you're an actor, you just act what comes along. That's really how it works. To be an actor, you're just on the end of a phone, you have to wait until people ring you up. It's the most humiliating job in the whole world. But, just to do it well occasionally is exciting."

His attitude towards his career and his involvement with *The Avengers*, today, is somewhat philosophical. "It was a thing of the 60s and we were ahead of our time. The thing that I gave to the show was the endurance to actually be there. When people talk to me about *The Avengers*, I'm delighted that they found it interesting, but to me, it's as if you suddenly said, 'Did you get a first in history when you were at college?' I say: 'It's do something in the 80s that is ahead of its time. If I'm going to do a series, I want it to be new.'"

Following his appearance in the *Empire* series, Macnee has returned to England after living and working for ten years in the United States. He will be next seen as Friar Tuck in a remake of *Robin Hood*. "You've caught me at a time when I'm doing some interesting things . . . one's always trying to discover new things, it's fun, but to just sit back, dwelling on the past . . . in the last ten years, I've spent a lot of time with my children—that's been good—because I didn't spend much time with them when they were young. I've lived a life rather than pursued a career."

Portions of this feature were taken from an interview with Patrick Macnee which was conducted by Jean-Marc and Randy Lofficier in California, September, 1982. Grateful acknowledgement is extended to them for their kind permission to include them in this feature.

SEASON ONE

Exec Prod: Sydney Newman.
Prod: Leonard White.
Regular cast: Patrick Macnee (as John Steed), Ian Hendry (Dr David Keel), Ingrid Hafner (Carol Wilson).
Series begins January 1961.

NOT SNOW

by Ray Edge/Patrick Brown, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Catherine Woodville, Philip Stone. Steed and Keel team up to track down Keel's fiancee's (Catherine Woodville) murderer.

BROUGHT UP BOOK

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Neil McCarthy, Carol White. Steed and Keel round up the last of the killers from last episode.

SQUARE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

by Richard Harris, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Michael Robbins, Delphi Lawrence. Steed finds himself on the wrong end of a murder plot.

NIGHTMARE

by Terence Feely, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Helen Lindsay, Gordon Byrd. Steed searches for a missing scientist and Keel needs a doctor.

CRESCENT MOON

by Geoffrey Bellman/John Whitney, Dir: John Knight. Guests: Roger Delgado, Eric Thompson. Steed investigates a kidnapping in the Caribbean. Keel holds the fort in London.

GIRL ON A TRAPEZE

by Dennis Spooner, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Delena Kidd, Nafisa Regim. A commando circus visits London and half the performers want to defect.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

by Max Marquis, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Douglas Muir (One-Ten), Steed's boss, Sandra Dorne. Steed and Keel tangle with diamond thieves.

THE RADIACTIVE MAN

by Fred Edg, Dir: Robert Transon. Guests: George Pravda, Christine Polson. Steed and Keel track down a murderer whose touch means death.

ASHES OF ROSES

by Peter Ling/Shelagh Ward, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Olga Lowe, Mark Eden. Steed and Keel investigate arson in the hairdressing world.

HUNT THE MAN DOWN

by Richard Harris, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Maurice Good, Melinda Shrimpton. Steed and Keel hunt down the gang from a robbery committed years before.

PLEASE DON'T FEED THE ANIMALS

by Dennis Spooner, Dir: Denis Vance. Guests: Terence Evans, Carole Boyce. A blackmailed civil servant uses the zoo as a drop-point for Government secrets.

DANCE WITH DEATH

by Peter Ling/Shelagh Ward, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Caroline Blackiston, David Sutton. A dancing school is the backdrop for a tale of murder and stolen diamonds.

ONE FOR THE MORTUARY

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Peter Hammond.

THE AVENGERS

Episode Checklist Part 1



Guests: Peter Madden, Ronald Wilson. Steed and Keel act as couriers to transport a secret formula to Europe.

THE SPRANGERS

by John Whitney/Geoffrey Bellman, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Douglas Muir (One-Ten), Brian Murphy. Keel impersonates a convict to help thwart a prison escape.

THE FRIGHTENERS

by Berkely Mather, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Stratford Johns, Dons Hare. Steed and Keel break up an extortion ring.

THE YELLOW NEEDLE

by Patrick Campbell, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Andrew Daker, Eric Dohse. An attempt is made on the life of a diabetic African leader by replacing his insulin with a yellow fever-virus.

DEATH ON THE SLIPWAY

by James Mitchell, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Frank Thornton, Nyree Dawn Porter. Steed fails an attempt to sabotage a nuclear submarine.

DOUBLE DANGER

by Gerald Turner, Dir: Roger Jenkins. Guests: Charles Hodgson, Robert Mill. Steed and Keel

track down a gang of diamond bandits.

TOY TRAP

by Bill Strutton, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Hazel Greene, Tony Van Bridge. Steed and Keel investigate a white slavery and call girl ring.

THE TUNNEL OF FEAR

by John Kruse, Dir: Guy Verney. Guests: Douglas Muir (One-Ten), Nancy Roberts. A fireground is being used as a front for a spy ring.

THE FAR DISTANT DEAD

by John Lucarotti, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Francis de Wolff, Tom Adams. Scandal in Mexico when hydraulic fluid is mistaken for cooking oil.

KILL THE KING

by James Mitchell, Dir: Roger Jenkins. Guests: Bert Kwouk, Patrick Allen. Steed is shot trying to prevent an assassination attempt on a visiting Arab monarch.

DEAD OF WINTER

by Eric Price, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: John Woodvine, Michael Sarne. War criminal try to set up a Fourth Reich.

THE DEADLY AIR

by Lester Powell, Dir: John Knight. Guests: Geoffrey Bayldon, Douglas Muir (One-Ten). Steed and Keel investigate murder among bacterial warfare scientists.

A CHANGE OF BAIT

by Lewis Davidson, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Peter Villiers, John Bilezik. The threat of industrial action is used to blackmail a fruit importer.

DRAGONSFIELD

by Terence Feely, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Alfred Burke, Barbara Shelley, Michael Robbins. Steed investigates murder and mayhem in the midst of a British space research programme.

SEASON TWO

This was the season that consolidated the Avengers formula which is best remembered today. Honor Blackman was introduced as Cathy Gale, and John Steed adopted his familiar Edwardian style of dress. Prod: Leonard White, Story Editor: John Bryce.

MR TEDDY BEAR

by Martin Woodhouse, Dir: Richmond Harding. Guests: Douglas Muir (One-Ten), Michael Robbins. A French assassin, Mr Teddy Bear, murders a man on live tv.

PROPELLANT 23

by Jon Marchig White, Dir: Jonathan Alwyn. Guests: Frederick Schiller, Justin Lord. A scientist carrying a canister of secret rocket fuel collapses and dies at a French airport.

THE DECAPOD

by Eric Price, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Philip Madoc, Julie Stevens (Venus Smith). Steed is assigned as a bodyguard to the president of a mid-European country.

BULLSEYE

by Eric Price, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Mitzi Rogers, Judy Parfitt. Cathy is framed for murder by a group of arms smugglers.

MISSION TO MONTREAL

by Lester Powell, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Pamela Ann Davy, Mark Eden. Steed poses as a steward on a cruise ship to investigate a murder.

THE REMOVAL MEN

by Roger Marshall/Jeremy Scott, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Edina Ronay, Julie Stevens (Venus Smith). Steed poses as a hired assassin to infiltrate a gang of killers.

THE MAINTAINUS PENWY

by Malcolm Hulke/Terence Dicks, Dir: Richard Harding. Guests: Alfred Burke, Philip Guard, Pollock/extremists use rare stamps to send coded messages.

DEATH OF A GREAT DANE

by Roger Marshall/Jeremy Scott, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Leslie French, John Leaver. Villain conspire to conceal the death of a millionaire to control his fortune.

THE SELL-OUT

by Anthony Terpiloff/Brandon Brady, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Jon Rollason, Carleton Hobbs. Steed is suspected of being a traitor.

DEATH ON THE ROCKS

by Eric Price, Dir: Jonathan Alwyn. Guests: Annette Kav, Hamilton Dyce. Steed uncovers

a plot to flood Merton Gentry with smuggled diamonds.

TRAITOR IN ZEBRA

by John Gilbert, Dir: Richmond Harding. Guests: Dennis Walker, June Murphy. Steed poses as a naval psychiatrist to investigate reports that a shore station is passing secret

THE BIG THINKER

by Martin Woodhouse, Dir: Kim Mills. Guests: Walter Hudd, Anthony Booth. A government computer scientist is found frozen inside his computer.

DEATH DISPATCH

by Leonard Fincham, Dir: Jonathan Alwyn. Guests: Gerald Harper, Douglas Muir (Dine-Ten). Steed and Cathy fly to Jamaica to recover a murdered cosmonaut's diplomatic pouch.

DEAD ON COURSE

by Eric Pake, Dir: Richmond Harding. Guests: Peggy Marshall, Janet Hargraves. A plane carrying a cargo of banknotes crashes and Steed is sent to investigate.

INTERCIME

by Terence Dicks/Malcolm Hulke, Dir: Jonathan Alwyn. Guests: Julia Arnall, Alan Browning. Steed and Cathy infiltrate a British Crime Syndicate.

IMMORTAL CLAY

by James Mitchell, Dir: Richmond Harding. Guests: Paul Eddington, Douglas Muir (Dine-Ten). A newly developed underwater ceramic material becomes the focus for murder and blackmail.

BOX OF TRICKS

by Peter Ling/Edward Rhodes, Dir: Kim Mills. Guests: Julie Stevens (Venus Smith), Ian Currin. NATO secrets are passed to unfriendly powers by a stage conjurer.

WARLOCK

by Doreen Montgomery, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Peter Arne, Douglas Muir (Dine-Ten). Foreign agents conceal their operation behind a Black Magic coven.

THE GOLDEN EGGS

by Martin Woodhouse, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Peter Arne, Donald Eccles. A deadly virus is concealed inside gold-plated eggs.

SCHOOL FOR TRAITORS

by James Mitchell, Dir: Jonathan Alwyn. Guests: Melissa Stribling, Julie Stevens (Venus Smith). A spy ring operates out of a British University.

THE WHITE DWARF

by Malcolm Hulke, Dir: Richmond Harding. Guests: Keith Pyott, Philip Latham. A scientist who believes a rogue star is heading for Earth is murdered.

MAN IN THE MIRROR

by Godfrey Orme/Anthony Terpiloff, Dir: Kim Mills. Guests: Julie Stevens (Venus Smith), Ray Barat. A forger forms a front for a group of foreign agents.

CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Alec Mango, Sandra Dorne. The Mafia put a contract out on Steed.

A CHORUS OF FROGS

by Martin Woodhouse, Dir: Raymond Merrin. Guests: Julie Stevens (Venus Smith), Eric Pahnlern. Steed and Venus thwart a millionaire who is developing a cultisture sub for his own nefarious ends.

SIX HANDS ACROSS A TABLE

by Reed R. de Rouen, Dir: Richmond Harding. Guests: Philip Madoc, Edward de Souza. Tycoon commits murder in an effort to control British smuggling.

KILLERWHALE

by John Lucarotti, Dir: Kim Mills. Guests: Patrick Magee, Morris Perry. The boxing world forms the backdrop for a story about smuggling.

SERIES THREE

After complaints from some viewers that the format of *The Avengers* had become too light-hearted, moves were made to toughen up the characters. This season had Cathy Gale become a professional agent, rather than an amateur helper and Steed's mode of dress became more outrageous, perhaps to compensate for his ruthless personality. Frequent guests Douglas Muir (Dine-Ten) and Julie Stevens (Venus Smith) are dropped. Prod:

John Bryce, Story Editor: Richard Bates.

BRIEF FOR MURDER

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: John Laurie, Alice Rose. Steed and Cathy pursue a man accused of treason at the Old Bailey.

THE UNDERTAKERS

by Malcolm Hulke, Dir: Bill Bain. Guests: Howard Goorney, Patrick Holt. An exclusive old people's home is the centre for a death duress evasion scheme.

THE MAN WITH TWO SHADOWS

by James Mitchell, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Gwen Watford, Daniel Moynihan. Steed uncovers a foreign plot to replace top government officials with doubles.

THE NUTSHELL

by Philip Chambers, Dir: Raymond Merrin. Guests: Edna Ronay, Patricia Haines. A list of

British agents has fallen into enemy hands - Steed plays Aunt the traitor.

DEATH OF A BATMAN

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Kim Mills. Guests: Andre Morell, Philip Madoc. Business men are keeping their companies afloat using counterfeiting money.

NOVEMBER FIVE

by Eric Pake, Dir: Bill Bain. Guests: Gary Hope, Ric Hurton. An MP is shot after a branch in seismology which leads Steed into a plot involving a stolen nuclear warhead.

THE GILDED CAGE

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Bill Bain. Guests: Patrick Magee, Nell Wilson. Steed and Cathy set up a billion robbery to trap a top-flight criminal.

SECOND SIGHT

by Martin Woodhouse, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Peter Bowles, Steven Scott. Smuggled transport diamonds in containers supposedly containing human tissue for cosmetic grafts.

THE MEDICINE MEN

by Malcolm Hulke, Dir: Kim Mills. Guests: Peter Barkworth, Newton Black. Steed and Cathy plot to sabotage a shipment of cosmetics to an arid nation.

THE GRANDEUR THAT WASARDINE

by Rex Edwards, Dir: Kim Mills. Guests: Hugh John Flint. An outbreak of mysterious illnesses, affecting people and animals, is traced back to an insecticide factory.

THE GOLDEN FLEECE

by Roger Marshall/Phyllis Norman, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Warren Mitchell, Terrell Evans. Steed and Cathy tangle with oriental gold smugglers.

DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Janine Grey, Kenneth Colley. A vengeful murderer traps Cathy alone in a weird old house.

DEATH A LA CARTE

by John Lucarotti, Dir: Kim Mills. Guests:

Henry Soskin, Robert James Steed and Cathy for an attempt to poison a visiting ambassador.

DRESSED TO KILL

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Brian Barrie. Guests: John Junkin, Leonard Rossiter. Steed and Cathy attend a fancy dress party and uncover a plot to seize control of the country missile defence stations.

THE WHITE ELEPHANT

by John Lucarotti, Dir: Laurence Bourne. Guests: Martin Freind, Geoffrey Quigley. When an elephant is kidnapped from a zoo, Steed and Cathy find themselves on the trail of a ring of ivory traffickers.

THE LITTLE WONDERS

by Eric Pake, Dir: Laurence Bourne. Guests: Lis Maxwell, Tony Steedman. Steed takes the cloak to thwart an ecclesiastical spy ring.

THE WRINGER

by Martin Woodhouse, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Peter Salter, Barry Letts. Steed is accused of causing the deaths of several British agents.

MANDRAKE

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Bill Bain. Guests: Philip Ladd, Robert Morris. When several wealthy people die and are buried in an out-of-town cemetery, Steed and Cathy uncover a gang who poison their victims.

THE SECRETS BROKEN

by Ludovic Peters, Dir: Jonathan Alwyn. Guests: Avic Landa, Valentino Muzio. A fake medium wheedles out the secrets of her clients and sells them to foreign powers.

THE TROJAN HORSE

by Malcolm Hulke, Dir: Laurence Bourne. Guests: James Donnelly, Arthur Pentelow. Steed connects a wealthy bohemian to a series of murders of pro-Russian diplomats.

BUILD A BETTER MOUSETRAP

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Peter Hammond. Guests: Donald Webster, Nora Nicholson. A clash between a motorcycle gang and two old ladies reveals the existence of a jamming device which affects all machinery.

THE OUTSIDE-IN MAN

by Philip Chambers, Dir: Jonathan Alwyn. Guests: Philip Anthony, Anthony Davies. Steed and Cathy expose the architect of an anti-British propaganda campaign in the revolution-torn country of Abraam.

THE CHARMERS

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Bill Bain. Guests: Fenella Fielding, Warren Mitchell. Steed is framed for the murder of an enemy agent and traces the culprits to a charm school.

CONCERTO

by Eric Pake, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: John Thaw, Roy Kinnear. Steed and Cathy discover a plot by a Scottish regiment to invade and occupy London.

ESPRIT DE CORPS

by Eric Pake, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: John Thaw, Roy Kinnear. Steed and Cathy discover a plot by a Scottish regiment to invade and occupy London.

LOBSTER DUANDRILLE

by Richard Lucas, Dir: Kim Mills. Guests: Bert Kwouk, Corinne Rétiveau. An unusual chess piece found on the body of a dead agent leads Steed to the murderer.

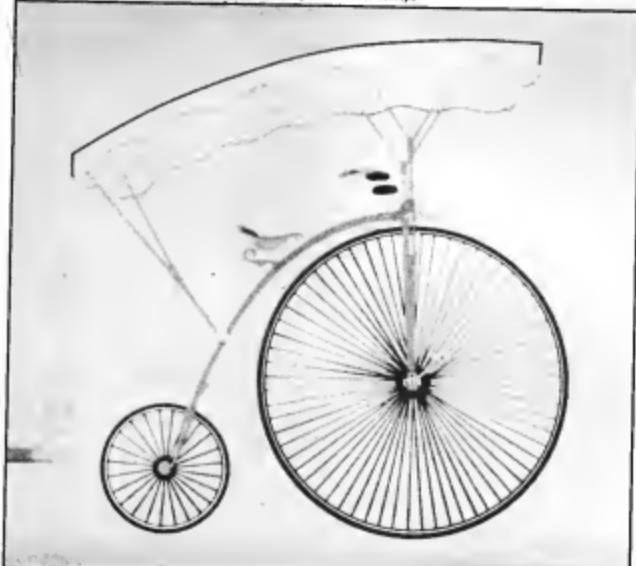


the Prisoner

Feature by Jon Abbott



Above: *The Prisoner* (Patrick McGoohan) has a feeling he is being followed by the village police. Below: The series' famous symbol of absurdity and eccentricity.



When *The Prisoner* was first broadcast in 1967, on Sunday evenings at 7.25, I was eleven years old, and as beffled as anybody by the complexity of this new, eagerly-awaited fantasy series. When it was eventually repeated in late-night slots some years after the furor had died down, I was fourteen and aware by now that this strange series was not quite what it pretended to be. I worked at figuring it out. It was seven years later before it was shown again, by which time it had attained the status of a cult series. I sat and watched it in the company of people my own age and older who still hadn't figured it out. I laughed out loud. I loved it.

When *The Prisoner* was first screened, it was almost universally panned by perplexed audiences and populist pundits alike. The average TV viewer had by then already been conditioned not to think while watching, and take what they saw at face value, while the newshounds, running with the pack as usual, jumped on their prey with the same jackal-like enthusiasm with which they've recently greeted Channel Four, and, more deservedly, TV-AM. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

The ingenuity and imagination of *The Prisoner* is unparalleled in British TV, except perhaps by *The Avengers* and the William Hartnell episodes of *Doctor Who*... but whereas the style and success of those two series can be attributed to a happy accident, *The Prisoner* was a very definite and deliberate statement by a man who had suddenly and unexpectedly found himself in the enviable position of being able to call the shots, a brave indulgence that paid off in spades artistically, if not in the intended financial manner preferable to a bamboozled ITC and their American buyers.

The series was conceived by McGoohan, writer/producer David Tomlin, and George Markstein, script editor on both this series and *Danger Man*, the straightforward spy thriller on which McGoohan had made his name and reputation. Markstein had worked in some capacity British Intelligence (it's him at the desk in the opening sequences), and knew that there are places where retired spies were sent to quietly live out the rest of their lives if their heads were too full of secrets to take chances with. Imagine, for example, a drunken, embittered ex-agent, or an aged operative approaching senility.

But whereas Markstein saw the series as a simple and logical extension of *Danger Man*, McGoohan came to see the series as a surrealistic and symbolic commentary on the absurdities and hypocrisies of the British way of life, actively taking an ever-increasing hand in the overall look and direction of the show, contributing to the bizarre little visual touches, and writing and directing three episodes, "Free For All", "Once Upon A Time", and "Fall Out", episodes in which the imagery and double-meanings are naturally at their strongest. "Free For All" is a marvellous satire on politics, and the ultimate futility of freedom of speech when the establishment is holding all the cards before and after you open your mouth, while the latter are the two concluding episodes that caused all the controversy.

Markstein, the masses, and ITC abandoned the series, and it ended its prematurely curtailed seventeen-week run in the 11.15 graveyard slot on Sunday nights, amidst the jeers of our society's very own Number Twos, the conformists and narrow-minded non-thinkers who McGoohan's glorious, near-private joke had been sending up all along. This he did in the guise of a bizarre science-fictional spy drama based partly on fact, but mostly outrageous fantasy and imagery that grew

even more bizarre as the series went on.

The Prisoner was a scathing, satirical indictment of British complacency in which society is represented by The Village, a grand mass delusion of parades and privileges earned. Here, the majority of inhabitants turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the quiet atrocities of the community leaders (each a Number Two answerable only to the mysterious unseen Number One) which are committed on the few inhabitants who refuse to conform. These are fellow prisoners who dare to ask questions ("Questions are a burden to others" is one of the many Orwellian slogans that adorn the walls of the village public places), who resist their masters' conditioning and try to escape.

McGooch plays the non-conformist Number Six, forever trapped in an environment where the people are free to do exactly as they please just so long as they do exactly as they're told. Sound familiar? The daily paper is the "Tally-Ho". Each day starts with the over-familiar friendly tones of an insincere announcer on a radio and loud-speaker system that can't be turned off, and which broadcasts the day's instructions to the villagers as activities they might wish to participate in. Each week McGooch is harangued by the latest of the faceless bureaucratic Number Twos. Their task is to extract "information" from him, the information that caused him to furiously resign from their set-up... to break his will, but without damaging him, for he has something they want. They must know... Why doesn't he want to do as he's told, like everybody else? Why can't he just be happy in their village? Why must he be difficult and disruptive?

Incredibly, so many years on, there are still some people who haven't yet twigged the double-meanings behind this series, even though McGooch blew the whistle on himself rather obviously for the final two episodes, abandoning the spy theme completely when the financial rug was pulled out from underneath his feet and he was ordered to wrap up the series. As most viewers had been following the stories purely on this surface level, all hell broke loose when McGooch switched from symbolism to cut and out surrealism for the final two episodes which were to reveal all, with a bizarre scenario including hooded accusers each labelled after one of society's ills, a model house and office complete with bars (which eventually takes down the M1) and an unintelligible youthful rebel whom no-one can understand.

McGooch was joined for the climactic two-part by an earlier Number Two, Leo McKern (better known today as John Mortimer's Rumpole of the Bailey and the similarly symbolic and anarchic TV play *Country*), who takes him on a harrowing single-stage journey through the conditioning and gradual erosion of his freedom and independent ideas throughout his life in a last-ditch effort to make the Prisoner explain himself. Did the village belong to "our side" or "their side"? It hardly mattered of course, as the conclusion to the series makes abundantly clear, but ITV was besieged by indignant callers and perplexed viewers, while the hacks from the real-life "Tally-Ho" had a field day stirring up outrage over the amazing, arrogant "top". Did their editors really know what the series had been trying to say, and were they trying to discredit it, or were they genuinely mystified by its message? That question alone could supply enough paranoid input for an as yet unreleased eighteenth episode, but of course the sense is gone, remembered, but firmly wedged in its time period. Fifteen years on, its credibility and sophistication marred only by the attentions of a nutty fan club of the sort that constantly makes TV and a laughing stock in the eyes of the general public (but which has at least succeeded in their ➤



Top: *The Prisoner* undergoes a true-or-false test, village-style. Middle: McGooch confronts the show's script editor, George Markstein, in *Many Happy Returns*. Bottom: In *Checkmate* McGooch does the word round at the village hospital with Peter Wyngarde.



the Prisoner Episode Checklist

Prod: David Tomblin, Dir.
Photography: Brandon Stafford,
Music: Ron Grainer. Regular cast:
Patrick McGoohan (Number Six),
Angelo Muscat (The Butler).

ARRIVAL
by George Markson/David Tomblin, Dir.
Don Chaffey Guests: Paul Eddington, Virginia
Madsen. The Prisoner arrives at the Village,
where those in control try to determine
the reasons for his resignation from the
British Secret Service.

THE CHIMES OF BIG BEN

by Vincent Tiley, Dir. Don Chaffey Guests:
Leo McKern, Farley Granger. Number Six is the
victim of a complex trap to make him think
he has escaped the Village.

A, B & C
by Anthony Skaane, Dir. Pat Jackson
Guests: Peter Bowles, Sheila Allen. Number
Six avoids Number Six's desire to
attempt to find the information he needs.

FREE FOR ALL
by Patrick Fitz, Dir. Patrick McGoohan. Eric

Butman, Rachel Herbert. The Prisoner
attempts to get himself elected to the post of
Number Two.

THE SONICRO MAN

by Terence Feely, Dir. Pat Jackson Guests:
Anton Rupert, Jane Merrow. The controllers
of the Village use a double of Number Six to
make him doubt his identity.

THE GENERAL

by Joshua Adam, Dir. Peter Graham Guests:
John Castle, Colin Gordon. The Prisoner
thwarts a plot to control the minds of the
villagers through an electronic "Teaching de-
vice".

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

by Anthony Skaane, Dir. Joseph Sarf
Guests: Patrick Cargill, Donald Sinden. The
Prisoner finds the Village abandoned and
attempts to escape.

DANCE OF THE DEAD

by Anthony Skaane, Dir. Don Chaffey
Guests: Duncan Macrae, Mary Morris. The
Prisoner negotiates with a village girl to determine
an SOS note in a coffin lying in the Village.

DO NOT FORSAKE ME OH MY DARLING
by Vincent Tiley, Dir. Pat Jackson Guests:
Nigel Stock, Clifford Evans. The Prisoner's
mind is transferred to another's body.

IT'S YOUR FUNERAL

by Michael Cramoy, Dir. Robert Asher
Guests: Diana Nemeth, Wanda Ventham. The
controllers of the Village try to convince
Number Six of an assassination plot to avert

CHECKMATE

by Gerald Kelway, Dir. Don Chaffey Guests:
Peter Wyngarde, Ronald Radd. The Prisoner
is the pawn in a deadly chess game.

A CHANGE OF MIND

by Roger Parkes, Dir. Joseph Sarf Guests:
George Pravda, Angela Browne. Still trying to
discover Number Six's reasons for quitting
the service, the controllers use complex elec-
tronics to transform his thought processes.

HAMMER INTO ANVIL

by Roger Welford, Dir. Pat Jackson Guests:
Victor Maddern, Patrick Cargill, Number Six
thinks he can't be Number Six when he's under
the employ of the Controllers.

THE GIRL WHO WAS DEATH
by Terence Feely, Dir. David Tomblin
Guests: Dr. Christopher Benjamin, Joanne
Lord. Number Six engaged in a battle for
survival with a girl who calls herself Death.

ONCE UPON A TIME

by Patrick McGoohan, Dir. Patrick
McGoohan Guests: Peter Swinwick, Leo
McKern. The Prisoner is subjected to a
dangerous electronic mind probe device.

FALL OUT

by Patrick McGoohan, Dir. Patrick
McGoohan Guests: Peter Swinwick, Leo
McKern. The Prisoner finally escapes from
the village, but finds the outside as much of a
prison.

LIVING IN HARMONY

by David Tomblin, Dir. David Tomblin,
Guests: David Bauer, Aleus Kanner. Number
Six inexplicably finds himself as a sheriff in a
Western town and is torn between his peace-
keeping instincts and the necessity of carrying a
gun.



Top left: McGoohan and butler Angelo Muscat braise the enigmatic black Auras that took him to the village, and his own distinctive custom car. Bottom left: McGoohan and would-be world conqueror Kenneth Griffith in *The Girl who was Death*. Above: The Prisoner Living in Harmony.



Top: McGrohan looks slightly uncertain about running for office in *Free For All*. Bottom: Local calls only on the village telephone.



persistent lobbying for repeats), even ITV was prepared to feature an episode as one of its finest achievements in its "Best Of British" season a couple of years ago, a selection that otherwise hardly lived up to its hopeful title. Number Six would have been amused.

"Arrival" is the opening episode in which McGrohan first encounters the Village, and not surprisingly is a definitive example of the series, in which the stage is set for the Prisoner's coming struggle with his smug kidnappers. It's essential to have seen this episode to fully appreciate the effect of those that follow. Masterfully constructed with split-second precision editing and direction, the villagers' statements are infuriatingly unhelpful and laced with double meanings ("Feed free", "Be seeing you") as he explores his elegant Alcatraz. Meeting the first of many Number Twos, he snaps "Get Number One!" "As far as you're concerned, I'm in charge" is the smooth reply.

If "Arrival" can be considered the definitive explanatory episode, "The Schizoid Man", in which Number Six is transformed seemingly overnight into a man who is about to become a duplicate of Number Six in order to break him (1), demonstrates perfectly the series' own distinctive speciality, that of a plot within a plot, meanings within meanings, and wheels within wheels, marvellously intriguing in its complexity and a tour de force from McGrohan. Unfortunately, the inevitable climax of this episode, while executed quite professionally, is all too obvious, and Number Six has been shown to be so devious and resourceful in this and other episodes that it's difficult to imagine that he should ultimately fall so carelessly for one of the oldest tricks in the book at story's end. "The General", a witty satire on education in which the villagers gleefully participate in brainwashing under the guise of speed-learning without mistakes, is challenging and successful throughout many superbly realised and bizarre scenes: a single man being chased along the beach by a mob, deceptively reassuring TV broadcasts, the idiocy of the villagers, a drawing room filled with sheet-covered busts, and a self-indulgent garden where pupils do anything but learn while under the impression that they're learning. Again it almost, but not quite, falls apart in the closing scene, when people begin to act out of character for the sake of a speedy convenient resolution.

One episode with a genuine twist ending is "Checkmate", easily another of the best tales, with a final scene both entirely unexpected yet totally logical. Only "Many Happy Returns", in which the Prisoner wakes one morning to find the village deserted and abandoned and promptly sets about making a getaway, slams home so effectively the force of the despair Number Six must experience at having come so close to freedom after so much effort, only to be thwarted in the final stages of his plans.

Given the strenuous physical exertion expended by the Prisoner in these episodes, it's ironic that this final escape is generally straightforward once his exhausting symbolic battle of minds is completed with McKern.

The series must be seen complete, and every episode is a gem, but although there were no bad episodes, certain episodes are inevitably stronger than others. "Hammer Into Anvil" was perhaps one of the most conventional episodes of the series, and as such one of the most immediately accessible at first viewing. Because of this, unlike the more complex, multi-layered episodes, it stands up to repeat screening the least well, having had most of its impact at first viewing. A straightforward hero/villain set-up is established in the first scene when the latest Number Two (comedy character



Top left: *The Prisoner* prepares for some Fall Out. Bottom left: McGoohan attends a Dance of the Dead with Mary Morris and Norma West. Above: McGoohan on the beach 'cave' set. Opposite page, top left: The Village cordless telephone. Bottom left: Another lovely day in the village . . . Top right: *The Prisoner* adapts to life in the wild west during another of his captors' elaborate stunts, in *Living in Harmony*. Middle right: McGoohan on location in the village. Bottom right: Number Six enjoys life in *Free For All*.

actor Patrick Cargill, who appears in an earlier episode) confronts Number Six. Already shown to be a particularly nasty sadist, as opposed to the usual gentlemanly adversaries of other episodes, he taunts McGoohan, sneering, "I wonder what's going on in that mind?". "Disgust," replies McGoohan, unhesitatingly! Cargill's portrayal of the man's breakdown and gradual disintegration around his colleagues and underlings is faultless, but despite the immediate enjoyment in watching this pantomime villain's downfall (McGoohan has it in for him after he has seen a young girl driven to suicide as a gut-level response, the plot's conventional enough to have been an episode of any well-made TV series with an elaborate and ingenious scam at its premise).

Equally conventional, but containing some of the usual unique mystery, magic, and double-meanings readily identified with the series is "It's Your Funeral", in which an ugly end for a former Number

Two is planned by his fellows. Number Six, for no good reason, assumes that if the assassination attempt is successful, a horrible punishment will be meted out on the village (and destroy the illusion of a contented society, while simultaneously revealing keepers from the kept by their immunity!), although just what form this might take is never explored, and the Prisoner never once suspects the usual trap. He decides he must warn the victim and again plays the hero. It's these episodes that come the closest to straining the show's already naturally tenuous credibility. If we are to accept the analogy of the series' premise, we must also accept Number Six as the persecuted, not a knight in shining armour.

Three of the strangest episodes of the series, that helped add to the cult of the bizarre that the cancelled series would be thrust into, were a direct necessity of the premature curtailment of the show (originally intended to be in groups of thirteen, the series was finally extended to a complete run of

seventeen). Producer David Tomlinson was presented with the thankless task of producing three episodes and a finale without the very village locale that the Prisoner was trapped in, and one of them without the star himself! The writers rose to the task admirably with remarkable resourcefulness and imagination, achieving their aim with three extraordinary and brilliant plays. In "Do Not Forsake Me Oh My Darling", the Prisoner's mind is placed inside another body, and the entire episode takes place with Number Six played by a different actor (Nigel Stock)! "The Girl Who Was Death" is a hilarious "Avengers"/U.N.C.L.E.-type spoof, complete with madman who wants to take over the world (dressed in the typically appropriate garb, of course), with McGoohan inexplicably chasing the would-be world conqueror and his femme fatale through a TV wonderland of eccentric '60s Britain far removed from (but naturally reminiscent of) the village. Again, the solution to this scenario,



although hinted at throughout the entire film with groan-inducing hindsight, is both elusive and desperately obvious, as usual revealed only in the final minutes. Most outrageous of all (and terribly upsetting to the American buyers of the series, for whom this was the last straw—they didn't even show the episode until after its initial run, when it went into syndication) was "Living in Harmony", in which McGoohan is dropped, again without explanation, until the final scenes, into a western adventure. Even the opening credits were remade in western format! It's difficult to decide which of the episodes of the series were the best: the contrived, painstakingly composed early installments, or the later, equally ingenious hastily improvised ones. In the final analysis, perhaps it's the combination of them both that gives the series its very special uniqueness. Its day is done, but it remains as relevant and as entertaining as ever, a genuine television achievement and landmark.



DIANA



RIGG

Feature by Richard Hollis

I didn't seem to matter whether she was fighting robots, mad scientists or power crazy eccentrics, among TV audiences Mrs Emma Peel was the most popular companion for the debonair secret agent John Steed. And that's not so surprising when you stop to consider that that part was played with such gusto by Shakespearean actress, Diana Rigg. Patrick Macnee, who showed a soft spot for all his female partners from Honor Blackman to Joanna Lumley, often commented, when interviewed, that Diana's talent for acting had taught him a great deal about how to play his own character on screen.

It goes without saying that Diana Rigg is one of the most important of British actresses. Author of a book on theatre criticisms, she has never hidden the fact that through a multitude of film and television roles her greatest love is for the stage. "It keeps you vital, on your toes," she explains. "Anybody can act; what is required is the ability to believe in what you are saying, however unbelievable the situation or character may be."

Diana Rigg was born in Doncaster in July 1938. Her parents decided to return to India where they had been living for a number of years, and so Diana went with them and lived in Jodhpur near Bombay until she was seven. On returning to England for schooling she began to show an interest in drama and recitation. Aged 17, she left school to attend the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. After a short spell in modelling she appeared in her first repertory production,

"The Passing of the Third Floor Back", at the Civic Theatre in Chesterfield. Soon after she successfully auditioned for the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford. Her first television appearance took place in 1964 when she played opposite Harry H. Corbett in the ITV comedy *The Hothouse*.

Diana's first connection with *The Avengers* came when the production team invited her to take a screen test with show's leading man, Patrick Macnee, who had played John Steed opposite Honor Blackman's Catherine Gale for the show's past two seasons. (Ian Hendry co-starred as Dr David Keel in the first season.) The producers were searching for a suitable actress to replace Blackman as the new female lead, and after viewing a tape of the Armchair Theatre production, *The Hothouse*, on the advice of casting director Dodie Watts, they sensed that Diana Rigg could be the one. Originally, they had hired an attractive girl named Elizabeth Shepherd, but despite being an accomplished actress, the producers decided she didn't inject the right kind of light comedy needed for the character. But Ms Rigg's acting debut with Macnee was an immediate success, with the couple finding an instant rapport. Consequently she was given a long-term contract to play the part of Emma Peel in *The Avengers*.

"I auditioned for the part as a giggle," she remembers, "while still with the Royal Shakespeare Company". This was to be the turning point of her entire career. In *The Avengers* she was nominated Actress of the Year in 16 European countries and the series





developed into a cult with a worldwide audience, totalling 30 million viewers.

Diana's first contract for *The Avengers* was worth £20,000. She was virtually unknown as an actress, but while she starred in the series (a total of 52 episodes) she was constantly in demand by the press, all requesting interviews and photographs. The show's producer Julian Wintle described her performance as possessing "...an animal-like quality like no one else I know," and Macnee added, "I'm glad she's on my side."

Her fame allowed her to insist on more money for the second series and instead of £150 a week she found herself earning £450. Unfortunately television was not a media she relished. Yearning to return to the stage, she left *The Avengers* in December 1967 without any regrets. "It was the life of a mole - I rarely see daylight and I sleep on a camp bed during the lunch break."

The Americans, who had by now exerted a great influence over *The Avengers*, asked Diana Rigg to try her luck at a typical American sit-com series called, quite unimaginatively, *Diana*. Premiered in 1973 it only ran for a season. The stories depicted the home life of a beautiful young divorcee newly arrived in Manhattan from London. Her name Diana Smythe. "Quite frankly it was appealing," she remembers, "I really wanted to have a bash at something the Americans do incredibly well, and do it on their own soil, and do it under their own terms." Although the series paid her 23,000 dollars an episode it only ran for 13 weeks. As if to prove just how

Opposite page and above:
A lively selection of shots displaying the many and varied fashions Diane Rigg wore as Emma Peel in *The Avengers*. Her wardrobe was designed by John Bates (during her first season) and later by Alan Hughes. Top right: A scene from the Brian Clemens scripted *Avengers* episode, "The Living Dead". Right: Emma Peel in action.





This page: A collection of bizarre scenes from *The Avengers*, in which Diana Rigg usually found herself tied up as Emma Peel.

she detests the trappings of television. Diana Rigg recalls with some amusement that when she arrived in Hollywood, the studio sent a "three block long smoked glass limousine" to meet her. Six months later they sent her back to the airport in a "banged up studio station wagon". "I never stopped laughing on the plane home. You've failed, they were telling me, just in case you didn't know it."

She did go on to star in a number of films after leaving *The Avengers*, including *Theatre of Blood* with Vincent Price, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* with George Lazenby and *Hospital* starring George C. Scott. She told *Time* magazine that films and television were leading her down a path she did not wish to follow. After seeing a re-run of an old *Avengers* episode in New York City, she winced and commented, "It was like an early Joan Crawford movie. It had dated so fast."

Ironically the period look is part of the series' charm and Diana Rigg is still extremely popular in the role of Emma Peel among nostalgia buffs and fans of old television programmes. Even the Linda Thorson episodes that followed only ever worked when re-using situations and ideas created during the Rigg series, madcap assassins and outrageous institutions, all of them terribly British. The writers were reluctant to lose that successful formula, and attractive though she may be, Miss Thorson





This page: Emma Peel in action! For the required 'Kinky' image of her character in *The Avengers* Diana Rigg wore her famous leather cat-suit.

was really too young to carry off the part of Tam King with any conviction, and although it's easy to blame her for the demise of the series, it would be fairer to criticise the producer for the show (Clemens and Fennell were absent at the time) who mis-cast the part from the very beginning.

In 1972, Diana Rigg joined the National Theatre. She appeared semi-nude in Tom Stoppard's *Jumpers*, and very well covered up in Shaw's *Pygmalion*. More recently she starred in the award winning play *Night and Day* by Stoppard, and won an award herself in the highly underrated film version of Agatha Christie's *Ew Under the Sun*. Her West End appearance in 1983 was in Shaw's *Heartbreak House*, when she was in fine form as Rex Harrison's daughter. Not totally neglecting television she appeared as Clytemnestra in the 1979 BBC version of the *Orestes* trilogy.

As an actress Diana Rigg has moved on to other things, but although those days of "avenging" are far behind her she will perhaps be best remembered for her time opposite Patrick Macnee in the popular sixties show. As Dave Rogers points out in his excellent book on the series, "The Avengers was the first British made tv show to be screened prime-time on an American network coast to coast." And part of that success came about due to Diana Rigg's performance as Emma Peel. ■



SEASON FOUR

This series introduced Diana Rigg as Emma Peel (after a false start with Elizabeth Shepherd in the role). The Steed/Emma relationship was more light-hearted than the Steed/Cathy partnership. The plots became more fantasy oriented. Prod: Julian Wintle, Assoc Prod: Albert Fennell, Story Editor: Brian Clemens. Music: Laurie Johnson.

THE TOWN OF NO RETURN

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Roy Baker. Guests: Patrick Newell, Alan MacNaughton. Steed and Emma uncover a plot to take over Britain with an underground army being trained in the English countryside.

THE GRAVE DUNGERS

by Malcolm Hulke, Dir: Quinton Lawrence. Guests: Ronald Fraser, Wendy Ventham. Saboteurs are jamming Britain's early warning system by burying devices in cemeteries around the country.

THE CYBERNAUTS

by Philip Levene, Dir: Sidney Hayers. Guests: Michael Gough, Bert Keely. A crazed scientist uses a robot killer of his own invention to settle with his enemies.

DEATH AT BARGAIN PRICES

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Charles Crichton. Guests: Andre Morell, Alan Cuthbertson. Tracing a kidnapped atomic scientist, Steed and Emma discover a department store which has been converted into an atomic bomb.

CASTLEDEATH

by John Lucarotti, Dir: James Hill. Guests: Gordon Jackson, Robert Urquhart. A haunted castle in Scotland is a cover for a complex plan to control the British fishing industry.

THE MASTERMINDS

by Robert Banks Stewart, Dir: Peter Graham Scott. Guests: Laurence Hardy, Patricia Heaton. Clients of an exclusive country club are hypnotised into committing acts of murder.

THE MURDER MARKET

by Tony Williamson, Dir: Peter Graham Scott. Guests: Parky Capil, John Woodvine. The proprietors of the Twogetherness Marriage Bureau run a murder agency in their spare time.

A SURFET OF KNOB

by Colin Finbow, Dir: Sidney Hayers. Guests: Noel Purcell, Sue Lloyd. A deadly remaking device is concealed in a wire factory.

THE HOUR THAT NEVER WAS

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Gerry O'Hara. Guests: Gerald Harper, Ray Kinnair. Visiting an RAF airfield for its closing down party, Steed finds the place deserted and all the clocks stopped at 11. The staff are being brainwashed to reveal military secrets.

DIAL A DEADLY NUMBER

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Peter Bowles, Clifford Evans. Personal "killer" devices are being altered to kill their owners.

THE MAN-EATER OF SURREY GREEN

by Philip Levene, Dir: Sidney Hayers. Guests:

Athena Seyler, Derek Farr. Steed and Emma battle an intelligent carnivorous plant from outer space, which has hypnotic powers.

TWO'S A CROWD

by Philip Levene, Dir: Roy Baker. Guests: Warren Mitchell, Julian Glover. An enemy agent with a passion for lethal, radio-controlled models engages Steed and Emma in a duel to the death.

TOO MANY CHRISTMAS TREES

by Tony Williamson, Dir: Roy Baker. Guests: Edwin Richfield, Mervyn John. Steed finds himself a victim of a group of deadly hitmen who project terrifying illusions from classic novels into the minds of their targets.

SILENTDUST

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Roy Baker. Guests: William Franklin, Jack Watson. A chemical fertilizer gone wrong begins to kill off British wildlife. Steed and Emma head for the great outdoors to combat the deadly menace.

ROOM WITH A VIEW

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Roy Baker. Guests: Paul Whitson-Jones, Peter Arne. Steed discovers the existence of a Maoist communists camp in the heart of London.

SMALL GAME FOR BIG HUNTERS

by Philip Levene, Dir: Gerry O'Hara. Guests: James Villiers, Bill Fraser. A band of blowpipes taking savages are operating in the English countryside. Steed, Tsooz, Emma and June.

THE GIRL FROM UNIUNE

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Roy Baker. Guests: Udo Frahm, Alfred Burke. Emma is kidnapped and offered for sale to the highest bidder. Steed and a girl hired to impersonate Emma search for the real item.

THE 18TH HOLE

by Tony Williamson, Dir: Roy Baker. Guests: Patrick Allen, Peter Jones. An exclusive golf club is the centre of an assassination operation.

THE QUICK-DUCK-SLOW DEATH

by Robert Banks Stewart, Dir: James Hill. Guests: Monroe Kaufman, Eunice Gayson. A dancing academy is being used to introduce间諜 agents into the country.

THE DANGERMAKERS

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Charles Crichton. Guests: Fabio Drak, Nigel Davenport. When several high-ranking military officers are killed in reckless stunts, Steed and Emma investigate.

A TOUCH OF BRIMSTONE

by Brian Clemens, Dir: James Hill. Guests: Peter Wyngarde, Colin Jeavons. A revival of the notorious Hellfire Club deploys a plot to assassinate three foreign prime ministers with one blow. Steed joins up and Emma is crowned Queen of Sin (hubba, hubba).

WHAT THE BUTLERSAW

by Roger Marshall, Dir: Bill Bain. Guests: John Le Mesurier, Thorley Walters. Steed is tipped off that one of three high-ranking military men is passing secrets to unfriendly foreign powers.

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

by Brian Clemens, Dir: Don Leaver. Guests: Michael Goodliffe, Griffith Davies. Mrs Peeler is trapped in a dilapidated house filled with murderous automatic devices, with Steed as her only escape.

THE AVENGERS

Episode Checklist

Part 2



A SENSE OF HISTORY

by Martin Woodhouse, Dr: Peter Grahame-Scott. Guests: Nigel Stock, Patrick Mower. *Steed and Mrs Peel* stumble across a battle between two underground extremist groups to control Europe.

HOW TO SUCCEED AT MURDER

by Brian Clemens, Dr: Don Leaver. Guests: Sarah Lawson, Angela Browne. When several financiers are murdered, *Mrs Peel* uncovers an extreme feminist group who plan to rule the world.

HONEY FOR THE PRINCE

by Brian Clemens, Dr: James Hill. Guests: Ron Moody, George Pastell. A company called Quatre Dame Fantastic live in the business of making people's fantasies come true... except that it is the cover for an assassination bureau.

SEASON FIVE

This was the first season of *The Avengers* made in colour. The science fiction episodes in the last season proved the most popular with audiences, so the producers played up this angle. Exec Prod: Julian Winn, Prod: Brian Clemens & Albert Fennell.

FROM VENUS WITH LOVE

by Philip Levene, Dr: Robert Day. Guests: Barbara Shelley, Jon Pertwee. *Steed and Mrs Peel* investigate the murders of several amateur astronomers, who appear to be the victims of an extra-terrestrial intelligence.

THE FEAR MERCHANTS

by Philip Levene, Dr: Gordon Flemyng. Guests: Patrick Cargill, Andrew Keir. *Steed and Mrs Peel* track down an assassination ring who exploit the secret fears of their victims.

ESCAPE IN TIME

by Philip Levene, Dr: John Krish. Guests: Peter Bowles, Imogen Hassall. An inventor

claims to have invented a time machine, but is revealed to be a hoaxter.

THE SEE-THROUGH MAN

by Philip Levene, Dr: Robert Asher. Guests: Mora Lister, Warren Mitchell. Ministry files are being plundered, apparently by an invisible burglar.

THE BIRD WHO KNEW TOO MUCH

by Alan Feltus/Brian Clemens, Dr: Roy Ross. Guests: Ron Moody, Kenneth Cope. *Energy* agents track pigeons to fly over missile bases carrying automatic cameras and sell the photos to the highest bidder.

THE WINGED AVENGER

by Richard Harris, Dr: Gordon Flemyng/Peter Duffell. Guests: Nigel Green, Jack McGowan. Several ruthless business men are killed by a mysterious assassin who apparently has the power to walk up walls.

THE LIVING DEAD

by Anthony Mann/Brian Clemens, Dr: John Krish. Guests: Julian Glover, Pamela Ann Davy. *Steed and Mrs Peel* become embroiled in the ghost-chasing investigations of two rival parapsychological societies, SMOG and FOG.

THE HIDDEN TIGER

by Philip Levene, Dr: Sidney Hayers. Guests: Ronnie Barker, Gabrielle Drake. Domestic cats are fitted with an electronic medallion which turns them into crazed killers.

THE CORRECT WAY TO KILL

by Brian Clemens, Dr: Charles Crichton. Guests: Michael Gough, Peter Medak. *Steed and Mrs Peel* team up with Russian agents to track down a rogue KGB man.

NEVER NEVER SAY DIE

by Philip Levene, Dr: Robert Day. Guests: Christopher Lee, John Junkin. A scientist discovers a method of keeping people's brains alive using computerized robot doubles.

EPIC

by Brian Clemens, Dr: James Hill. Guests: Peter Wyngarde, Isa Miranda. *Created* movie studio executives embark on a spree of murder and mayhem... for real!

THE SUPERLATIVE SEVEN

by Brian Clemens, Dr: Sidney Hayers. Guests: Charlotte Remping, Brian Blessed, Steed and Emma, with five companions (all experts in the art of survival), are transported to a deserted island to put their skills to the test.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THEATRE

by Bryan Sharrett, Dr: John Krish. Guests: John Lauria, Ida Blau. *Steed and Mrs Peel* investigate the murder of a civil servant on the 8.10 to Newhaven.

SOMETHING NASTY IN THE NURSERY

by Philip Levene, Dr: James Hill. Guests: Yootha Joyce, Paul Eddington. High ranking Government officials suddenly begin to act like children.

THE JOKER

by Brian Clemens, Dr: Sidney Hayers. Guests: Peter Jeffrey, Sally Nasrat. *Mrs Peel* finds herself at the mercy of a crazed madman who helped imprison years earlier.

WHO'S WHO???

by Philip Levene, Dr: John Moxey. Guests: Patricia Haines, Freddie Jones. *Steed and Mrs Peel* have their bodies stolen by two enemy agents via a brain transference device.

THE RETURN OF THE CYBERNAUTS

by Philip Levene, Dr: Robert Day. Guests: Peter Cushing, Fulton Mackay. The brother of the original Cybernaut inventor returns to swear vengeance on *Steed and Mrs Peel* and unfeather the deadly robots once more.

DEATH'S DOOR

by Philip Levene, Dr: Sidney Hayers. Guests: William Lucas, Clifford Evans. Members of a British delegation are being kept out of the

talks by a sinister group who manipulate dreams and reality.

THE £50,000 BREAKFAST

by Roger Marshall, Dr: Robert Day. Guests: Yolanda Turner, Cecil Parker. *Steed and Mrs Peel* wade through a maze of ventriloquists, pet cemeteries and stolen diamonds.

DEAD MAN'S TREASURE

by Michael Winder, Dr: Sidney Hayers. Guests: Norman Bowler, Valerie Van Cat. *Steed and Mrs Peel* join a treasure hunt-circumlocution rally, in search of real treasure.

YOU HAVE JUST BEEN MURDERED

by Philip Levene, Dr: Robert Asher. Guests: Robert Flemyng, Barrie Ingham. After two dummy attempts on the life of a millionaire, the man is murdered for real.

THE POSITIVE-NEGATIVE MAN

by Tony Williamson, Dr: Robert Day. Guests: Michael Latimer, Ray MacAnally. A scientist discovers a method of transmitting electrical power via radio waves, and the discovery is used to kill electronics experts.

MURDERVILLE

by Brian Clemens, Dr: Robert Asher. Guests: Colin Blakely, John Romane. A small country village is used as a killing ground by assassins, apparently with the cooperation of the villagers.

MISSION... HIGHLY IMPROBABLE

by Philip Levene, Dr: Robert Day. Guests: Nicholas Courtney, Ronald Radd. *Steed and Mrs Peel* set out on the trail of a spy ring that possesses a deadly on/off instrument.

THE FORGOT-ME-KNOT

by Brian Clemens, Dr: James Hill. Guests: Linda Thorson, Patrick Newell. *Steed* discovers a traitor in the intelligence service and *Mrs Peel* discovers her husband, who bears an uncanny resemblance to *Steed*, is alive and *Leeds* *Steed* in the care of her replacement, *Tara King*.

The FRANKENSTEIN Chronicles

Part IV



Feature by Phil Edwards

The Son of Frankenstein in 1939 marked the end of the truly great years at Universal Pictures for the classic monster creations, although it didn't mean the end of the Frankenstein chronicles as far as the studio was concerned.

The climax of Son of Frankenstein saw Ygor (Bela Lugosi) shot, presumably to death, and the Monster knocked into the sulphur pit by an athletic Wolf Frankenstein (Basil Rathbone). The movie proved successful at the box office, but the law of diminishing returns was in operation and Universal saw no further reason to accord the Frankenstein pictures 'A' grade status or budgets. However, before Frankenstein's creation was relegated to an assortment of encounters with other denizens of the fright factory, in a fairytale world that could only be a figment of Hollywood's imagination, he was given one last solo showcase.

The Ghost of Frankenstein was to continue the adventures of Wolf

Frankenstein in its original screenplay by Eric Taylor although, for the most part was rewritten by W. Scott Darling. Wolf was written out of the tale and replaced by Ludwig, another son of Frankenstein played by Cedric Hardwicke. Ludwig is a "Doctor of the Mind" and is assisted by Dr Bohmer (Lionel Atwill). With the usual plot machinations which would become part and parcel of the Universal monster rallies to come, the Monster turns up, not killed by the boiling sulphur, but preserved by it. And so does Ygor. But having overdone the sulphur treatment the Monster is weakened and in one of the best scenes in the film, is struck by lightning. "Your father was Frankenstein," chortles Bela Lugosi as Ygor, "... but your mother was lightning!"

The Ghost, at an economical sixty-seven minutes fairly rattles along under Erle C. Kenton's sprightly direction. To give the title some meaning there's a brief scene in which Ludwig is visited by the ghost of his father (also played by Hardwicke) who urges him not

to destroy the creature, but refine it, with the addition of a good brain, to replace the abnormal one stolen by Dwight Frye all those years ago. The device proved a popular one it would seem, as in later years the game of "musical brains" seemed to be the major reason that the Frankenstein monster lumbered on.

But if Ludwig, like all his family, only had the best of scientific intentions, then Ygor, aided by Dr Bohmer had other ideas. With Ygor's brain in the Monster's head, he and Bohmer could rule the world! Ah, things were so much simpler then!

With Karloff no longer interested in playing the Monster, Universal looked to their latest genre star, Lon Chaney Jnr. The son of the famed Man of a Thousand Faces, Chaney Jnr had made something of a name for himself in the 1940 Man Made Monster and scored an even bigger hit in The Wolfman under director George Wagner, who acted as producer on The Ghost of Frankenstein.

But sadly, Chaney proved no match for

Karloff's understanding portrayal over three films. *The Ghost* would mark the first feature in which the Monster was reduced to little more than a dumb-brute killer, although an extended sequence where Chaney rescues a small girl's ball from a roof appeared to be a gesture on the part of the scripters and Kenton to imbue the Monster with something approaching humanity. But for the most part Chaney's performance is on the thick-eared side and Lugosi has little opportunity to enlarge upon the character of Ygor.

The operation goes ahead, the Monster gets Ygor's brain and the villagers begin to gather at the gates waving their usual assortment of torches and farm tools. Before the Monster goes down for the count amid the flames of the burning castle, we hear that the operation has been successful as he speaks with Ygor's voice. The movie proved a hit and the *Hollywood Reporter* for February, 1942 said of it, "...inevitably stands on an imaginative par with all of its interest-gripping quasi-scientific predecessors... Kenton's direction makes use of every element of suspense... and cast is definitely above average."

THE TEAM-UP TITLES

The following year saw the Frankenstein/Monster match (dim) wits with *The Wolfman*, Larry Talbot, played by the actor who'd made him famous Lon

Chaney Jnr. Wagner again produced and the direction was handled by Roy William Neill. *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* gets off to a good start as two grave robbers accidentally resurrect Larry Talbot, getting a rude shock as he transforms into the two-legged lycanthrope before their eyes. After Talbot comes to in a hospital, he goes on the rampage again before seeking out the gypsy woman Maleva (Maria Ouspenskaya). In case you're losing track, I'll remind you that it was her son (played by Bela Lugosi!) who had put the bite on Larry back in *The Wolfman*.

But Larry's tired of being a werewolf and old Maleva tells him that there is only one man in the world who can help him—Dr Ludwig Frankenstein! And so they set off to meet him. But Ludwig perished in the fire and before you know it Talbot's turned hairy again and during his pursuit, falls through into caverns below the ruins of the Frankenstein castle.

Here, he finds the Frankenstein Monster, preserved in ice. It's also here that the movie takes a bit of a nose-dive, although it appears that this was more due to post-production tampering than Curt Siodmak's screenplay. At the end of *Ghost of Frankenstein*, the Monster had been blinded and Siodmak had continued this plot variation in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*. However, before the movie was released not only was any reference to this deleted, but also any mention that he could speak. In the original script, the Monster's opening lines, "I can't see you... I'm blind, I'm sick. Once I had the strength of a hundred men. If Dr Frankenstein were alive, he'd give it back to me... so I could live forever." explained his situation and made sense of the clumsy lumbering around he does

for most of the rest of the picture.

With Chaney playing Talbot, it meant that the Monster would have to be portrayed by another actor. Obviously the continuity from *The Ghost of Frankenstein* was intended when the film went into production, as Bela Lugosi was signed to play the creature—still with Ygor's brain in his head! But Lugosi was ill for much of the production, his long term drug addiction weakening his physical state, so much that a stunt double (Eddie Parker) actually portrayed the monster for all the action scenes in the film. The real *raison d'être* for the feature, though, was the big confrontation between the deadly dynamic duo and the final punch-up which takes place in the ruins of Castle Frankenstein is indeed spectacularly entertaining. With Chaney transformed into the Wolfman once more, he collides head on with Parker's Monster in a slugfest that wouldn't look out of place in a serial. While the Titans of Terror battle it out, the ever-reliable villagers are busy dynamiting the dam which overlooks the castle.

Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman sealed the fate of the series from Universal. It set patterns and formulas in the scripting and direction departments which would forever be associated with the name of Frankenstein. And more, it relegated the studio's wonderful creations of the 30s to nothing more than B programmer status.

A MAD MONSTER PARTY

Working on the principal that "more means better", Universal's next outing in the Frankenstein Chronicles also included Dracula, as well as the Monster, the Wolfman, a mad doctor and a hunchback assistant! *House of*



Facing page: Lon Chaney Jnr as Universal's famous lycanthrope, Larry Talbot (left) and Bela Lugosi as 'the monster' in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (1943). Insert: Ygor (Bela Lugosi again) tries to close the door on the salesman tactics of the monster (this time played by Glenn Strange) who is left holding the baby in *Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942). Above: "Where did you get that haircut?" asks Ygor of the (Glenn) Strange looking monster. Right: The bearded features of Boris Karloff and J. Carroll Naish from *House of Frankenstein* (1944).



Right: "Let's dance" says Lon Chaney. Far right: The soft sell for House of Frankenstein. Below: Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman. Bottom right: Lon Chaney is comforted by a gypsy friend after he finds out he is to appear with Boris Karloff.



Frankenstein (1944) is more like two separate stories than one complete film. From an original story by Curt Siodmak, the screenplay by Edward T. Lowe introduces and then gets rid of Dracula (John Carradine, one of the best screen vampires) within little more than twenty minutes screen time in a subplot which seems more grafted on to the story than an integral part of it. But it's a lively little piece and the final studio setting of plaster rocks and exquisitely painted diorama, where Dracula falls victim to the rays of the rising sun is indeed striking. Lionel Aitwill is also back as the local police chief, a role similar to that of his Krogh from the Son of Frankenstein though this time with two good arms! Part two of House of Frankenstein,

however, stumbles along repeating much of the theatrics of Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman. This time 'round, Talbot and the Monster are both found frozen, presumably in the water from the dynamited dam.

Helping them out are Dr Gustav Niemann (Boris Karloff), a doctor, and his hunchbacked assistant Daniel (J. Carroll Naish). But Niemann's as mad as a hatter and although he intends to rid Talbot of the werewolf curse, he's also got plans of revenge for the people who had imprisoned him years before. One of them is going to have his brain transplanted into the head of the Monster, another is to have the Wolfman's brain inserted into his skull. He's also promised to operate on Daniel

and put his brain into Larry Talbot's body. What would have happened to poor old Larry's brain is anybody's guess!

At seventy minutes, House of Frankenstein may have been standard fare but it is at least full of characters and sub-plots galore, what with hunchbacks falling in love with gypsy girls and gypsy girls falling in love with wolfmen and the Frankenstein Monster lumbering around in the shape of Glenn Strange. The last five minutes is all go, with Talbot put out of his misery (again) by the girl that loves him, Daniel hurled to his death by the Monster and Niemann crippled, his back broken by Daniel. With the villagers attacking the castle, the Monster carries Niemann off to the local swamps where the two sink into the quicksand. ■

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DOCTOR WHO

THE NEW SEASON

Feature by Gary Russell

For those of you with either long memories, or large collection of *Starburst*, you may remember issue 27's John Fleming interview with the then new producer of *Doctor Who*, John Nathan-Turner expressing his ideas for how he wanted the programme to look in the 80s. Since then he has three seasons under his belt and the fourth is about to be unleashed onto an audience who, after *The Five Doctors* will be expecting nothing short of brilliance from the man who said: "We are concentrating on new writers who come with fresh ideas and a fresh outlook towards the programme" way back in 1980.

If nothing else, Nathan-Turner will probably be remembered as the only producer to have cast three actors in the role of the Doctor: first Peter Davison, then Colin Baker and, stuck in the middle, Richard Hurndall taking the late William Hartnell's place as the First Doctor. The 21st season could well be a make-or-break season, both with long-term fans and the general viewing public, for whilst Nathan-Turner's approach was very refreshing and exciting in 1980, by 1983 it had worn off considerably. There is a limit to how far viewers will accept a story that trundles along slowly featuring few, if any climaxes, until the very end of the fourth episode – one such story a season is okay, seven is a bit of a strain. Added to this is the dubious popularity of Peter Davison as the Doctor (fans at the BBC's Longleat Convocation last April will remember, I'm sure the attendee's reaction to the question, "Who is your favourite Doctor" when only about three hands went up in favour of poor Peter), and it isn't difficult to explain why viewers will be looking for something innovative and different in the new season.

So what have we got? Well, for starters, out of the seven stories scheduled, only two bear names new amongst *Doctor Who* writers. One is experiences BBC Classics writer Anthony Steven, who is penning the final story of the season, *The Twin Dilemma*, which will introduce Colin Baker as the Doctor.

On a slightly better note, three new directors debut, Graeme Harper, Michael Morris and Matthew Robinson, who has directed the potential *Doctor Who Magazine* Season Survey winner, *Resurrection of the*





Top left: Peter Davison as the Doctor. Middle left: The Doctor and Tegan (Janet Fielding) surrounded by Triclops creatures in *Frontios*. Below left: Tegan with Turough (Mark Strickson). Above: The Myrka monster attacks! Above right: Ingrid Pitt as Selov with the Doctor in *Warriors of the Deep*. Right: John Gillett as Grevus the Triclops. Below: A character from *The Awakening*.



Daleks, which as you may have guessed, features Terry Nation's creations zooming about in spaceships, raiding prisons and even cropping up in contemporary London, where incidentally the Doctor's entropic assistant, Tegan, remains at the end of the story. This mini-masterpiece has been written by script-editor Eric Seward, who also scripted the hugely popular *Earthshock* a couple of years back. As with *Earthshock*, *Resurrection of the Daleks* appears to have a large cast, so we can play "Guess which character will survive this episode," although with a role-call featuring Rule Lenska, Rodney Bewes and Maurice Colbourne, you can be sure those who die will probably die well!

Another story with a fairly big cast, and a returning monster (or monsters!) is the season opener, written by Johnny Byrne and directed by Penneit Roberts. This one is called *Warriors of the Deep* and features the Sea Devils and their land-based cousins, the Siluriens, trying to take over an underwater sebase of the not-too-distant future, whilst the human population are trying to deal with enemy agents and a huge sea creature called the Myrka. Very much the "typical" Doctor Who story, with scientific/military bases, a race of monsters, traitors, unseen opponents and the Doctor being mistaken for the enemy. ➤





Warriors of the Deep is a very fast-moving script, the Doctor never seems to have three seconds to spare before something arrives and starts killing people. Amongst the cast of this story is Tom Adams as the base's commander, Ingrid Pitt as the base's doctor and Ian McCulloch as the base's resident psycho.

Between these two "old monsters" stories are two tales featuring new monsters – firstly *The Awakening* a two-part written by the other newcomer, Eric Pringle. This strange story mixes the charm of English country life and all its traditions with the evil force of a visitor from space lying dormant in an old church, just waiting for the chance to feed off... what? Add to this a chap from the past and Tegan's grandfather and you might be left wondering how it will all fit into fifty minutes. Whatever the outcome, I'm sure the guest cast featuring Glyn Houston, Denis Lill, Polly James and Jack Galloway will carry it through with flying colours.

Next up is a story from ex-script editor Christopher H. Bidmead. As a producer, John Nathan-Turner seems to have gone through as many script editors as he has Doctors. Still, it's nice to see Bidmead back again, although if you are expecting stories similar to his scientific ones of the past, then I think you'll be surprised by what is best described as another "typical" Who script: this one



featuring an Earth colony of the future, stranded on a less than pleasant planet, with jovial, educated scientific types helping the Doctor and loud-mouthed, ignorant military types trying to kill him for no other reason than the fact that the TARDIS has landed in an awkward position. *Frontios* is a tremendously good script, full of the sort of wit from Bidmead that makes you wish he'd written every *Doctor* story for the last two seasons. Watch out in particular for the lovely little scene where the Doctor informs a reluctant Tegan that she is, to all intents and purposes, an android and then proceeds to put a screwdriver in her ear! Jaff Rawle, Peter Gilmore, Lasley Dunlop and William Lucas star in this one.

After the *Delak* story comes *Planet of Fire* written by sometime director/sometime writer Peter Grimwade, and featuring Anthony Ainlay once again as the Doctor's best enemy The Master. This is also Turlogh's last story and fans of Kamelion will be pleased to know that he/she'll make an appearance. *Planet of Fire* looks to be a curious mix of *The Incredibly Shrinking Man* and any old film set in pyramids you care to mention. Filming took place in sunny Lanzarote towards the end of last year and involved Mark (Turlogh) Strickson and Nicole (new companion Peri) Bryant splashing about in the water. Peri Brown and

her Step-father are holidaying in the Mediterranean when they meet up with the Doctor. After her step-father tries to drown, Peri is rescued by Turlogh who carried her aboard the TARDIS and discovers amongst her artifacts a strange object not of this world.

The TARDIS crew then zoom off to a distant planet where Peter Wyngarde leads a seemingly primitive tribe in their worship of a God whose return they all desire. Barbara Shelley (Baroness Z) fans may remember her as being the only positive point in the story *Starcrave*'s also guests. Of the final two stories, the *Devilon* bow-out is written by old favourite Robert Holmes and is called *The Caves of Androzani* and guest stars Robert Glenister of *Sink or Swim* fame and Christopher Gable, once principle dancer with the Royal Ballet and more recently was seen in *"Women in Love"*, the Ken Russell film. As I said earlier, the final story of the season introduces Colin Baker as the Doctor and is called *The Twin Dilemma* and looks set to round off the season with quite a bang.

Bearing in mind that two companions leave, one joins, the Doctor regenerates, the Daleks, the Master, the Silurians and the Sea Devils all return, the twenty first season should be quite a cracker. Let's hope that it is.

And maybe this season we'll actually find out if the Master is really the Doctor's—(Sorry folks, we're out of space!) ■



Opposite page, top left: Peter Davison as a thoughtful looking Doctor. Top right: A highly detailed monster, from the BBC effects department, advances on Tegan (Janet Fielding) and a space-suited crew in *Warriors of the Deep*. Right: "He seems like a nice boy" thinks the Doctor of this friendly Treetator creature (John Gilvert) in *Frontios*. This page, top left: The Doctor discovers something nasty behind the plaster in *The Awakening*. Above left: Not a pretty face! Top right: Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant, soon to be seen on our screens as the sixth Doctor and companion Peri Brown respectively. Above: A portrait of Colin Baker.

Starburst Review Section

BIG MEATEATER

"Unique pace and warped reality."

A Starburst Review by Alan Jones

Knock what Adanaco is? It's the new language to be spoken in the Canadian town of Burguilham's redevelopment into the Vision of Tomorrowland. Mayor Rigatoni has decreed this because his corpse has been reanimated by aliens and he wants Bob Sanderson's butcher shop to be the starting point for the project. He was killed by Abdullah the Big Meat Eater when he fired him for



singing "Baghdad Boogie" in the basement. But genius Jan Wejinski needs the Belonium fluid found in Sanderson's sewage tank to propel his car into orbit. All looks lost though when Jen's Moldavian grandmother, who carries a picture of the Golem in her pocket, discovers him in drag masquerading as a fake fortune-teller.

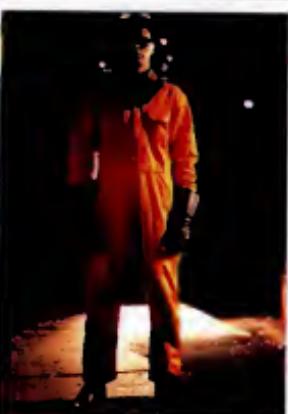
Confused? You won't be after seeing *Big Meat Eater* the strangest, wildest and weirdest film to come your way in a long while. Part *Rocky Horror*, with a score by J. Douglas Dodd which includes the highlights "Chemical World", the title song and "Bob's Theme" – and part '50s science-fiction, without being derivative of anything in any genre, this bizarre oddity is one of a handful of films you can truly call original.

I'm not sure if director Chris Windsor knew quite what he was doing at the time but it all seems to work despite a tailing off at the end where he just can't seem to tie the multitude of plot references and machinations together to make *Big Meat Eater* wholly satisfying.

The special effects are very cheap but Windsor makes them a virtue by offsetting this aspect with a sly awareness of knowing just how much he can get away with. A case in point are the aliens which are dime store robots shot in extreme close-up. Although they speak perfect English, they are subtitled in English as well.

So while I can't exactly rave about it, for a low budget labour of love *Big Meat Eater* has an intermittently great script and some clever touches that literally compel you to accept its unique pace and warped reality.

Even though the misleading title does seem to promise untold gory delights that fail to materialise, do see it, as *Big Meat Eater* is far too unusual to miss.



THE LIFT

"Never elevates our hopes beyond the second floor."

A Starburst Review by Alan Jones

A lift with a mind of its own is the baffling culmin of a series of bizarre 'accidents' in an office block. Maintenance man, Hube Stapel, can't find any mechanical fault but begins to suspect all is not as it should be when he confronts his boss with the knowledge that his predecessor ended up in a lunatic asylum. So he teams up with an investigative reporter to uncover the horribly alarming truth.

After a promising start, *The Lift* never elevates our hopes beyond the second floor. It determinedly sets out to shock and undeniably does so with hardly a drop of blood in evidence. But once outside the claustrophobic lift environment suspense is diffused as pure soap-opera takes over. Too many damming longeurs are provided by Stapel's broken marriage and the double act that pass themselves off as police. And the appalling dubbing doesn't help either.

Written/director/composer Dick Maas, one of Holland's top video promo directors, extracts every ounce of fear and menace he can in the final confrontation between man and machine. The blackened lift shaft area really does come into its own here as a credibly frightening setting. The concluding explanation though is, frankly, rather silly.

However, it is interesting to see an example of the Dutch exploitation film industry on view in our cinemas. And in the final analysis, that is really the only recommendation for seeing *The Lift*.



Three scenes of weird happenings in *The Lift*, an exploitation horror film from Holland.



THE KILLING TOUCH

"No great shakes but an entertaining effort nevertheless."

A Starburst Review by Alan Jones

Here's a nice new twist on that tired old wave of stalk and slash. Seven Olympic hopefuls are gradually speared to death while training at the Falcon Athletic Academy. Who is the javelin-wielding maniac and what is the point of all this mayhem?

Go back to your basic Brian De Palma, keeping in mind all you know about hormonal sex-changes, and the answer is easy to guess.

The Killing Touch goes steadily downhill after its taut establishing scenes as it blatantly throws all logic to the wind. But it shows a level of competence and professionalism unusual for this lower end of a now overpopulated genre. The basic premise is a good one and reveals yet another way of how an aware filmmaker can get acres of flesh on screen without it seeming all a tired cliché. The murders are virtually bloodless and really do surprise as Director Michael Elliot gets more mileage out of what some might construe as a somewhat limited weapon than you would expect. The most elegant example being an underwater shot with our wet-suited slayer lurking at the bottom of a swimming pool. *The Killing Touch* is really no great shakes but an entertaining effort nevertheless. And any film that has a potential victim staggering around on crutches and actually managing to avoid the somewhat slow stalking psycho gets my dubious vote.

GECK MAGGOT BINGO

"Transparently obvious con-trick."

A Starburst Review by Alan Jones

When a film sets out to be purposely bad – and succeeds beyond everyone's wildest dreams – how can you honestly critique what is in effect a transparently obvious con-trick?

Such is the case with *Geek Maggot Bingo*, Nick Zedd's awful film that is virtually unwatchable, unlistenable and a couple of other uns thrown in for good measure as well. It tries to follow the guidelines as set down by John Waters to achieve trash/tart status but it fails on every conceivable level. The incomprehensible jumble that passes for a plot seems to involve a mad doctor, a hunchback, a

two-headed three-legged monster and a few vampires, but don't quote me on that as I could be wrong.

The forced artlessness and contrived camp is especially self-conscious in the scenes involving a female Divine lookalike called Brenda Bergman. But then, even the actors – and I use that term very loosely indeed – which includes Zachariah, can't manage to keep a straight face. And as for ex-editor of *Fangoria* Bob Martin's cameo . . . it's a disgrace that he has hyped this film in recent issues because *Geek Maggot Bingo* is really just one of Zedd's amateurish home movies that should never have got a showing outside of his own living room.

Halfway through the film a notice comes up saying 'Leave now. It's not going to get any better'. Rather than be amused by this, I found it a sadly contemptible comment on the whole mentality behind the film.

Geek Maggot Bingo is supposedly rock group The Cramps favourite horror movie. They are more than welcome to it.

There is a rapidly growing army of people who are becoming disillusioned with the video industry – and I don't mean the self-appointed guardian of public morals. These are the genre enthusiasts who are tired of wading through the acres of appalling rubbish that is eye-catchingly packaged and thrust before a video public that cannot keep up with the astonishing amount issued. This column is a continuing attempt to plot a course through this jungle, and I regret the fact that you'll find far more dismissive notices than complimentary ones. Two prime contenders for the "Video to Watch Game for a Laugh instead of" award (hoping that's sufficient index of their quality) are Don Kessler's *The Bog* (Home Video) and Harry Preston's *Honeymoon Horror* (A1). More detailed reviews are, take it from me, unnecessary.

TRON – VISUAL DELIGHTS

Occasionally – very occasionally – a science fiction film touches on that fragile "sense of wonder" – often in the depiction of fantastic alien civilisations (the underground city of the long-dead Krell in *Forbidden Planet*, being the most striking example). With this in mind, Steven Lisberger's *Tron* (Disney) has to be applauded for tapping this magical vein many times in the bizarre imagery of its computer-created world. Admittedly, the clash of good (Jeff Bridges) and evil (David Warner) in the film is utterly conventional (the plot owes something to *Wizard of Oz*, which sets the child-like tone) but the backdrop for the conflict, with its light-cycles, dizzying chasms and glowing vistas, offers constant visual delights. Sound quality on the video is inadequate, even when pumped through hi-fi speakers, as bass tones often drown out dialogue. But as the latter is as rudimentary as the characterisation, this is a small flaw, not noticeably marring an interesting video experience – and I mean the last phrase literally!

MIRTHFUL MONSTERS

That night impossible blend – humour and realistic horror – has been achieved in all-too-few films (American *Werewolf in London* gets it just about right). But there's a video you should look out for that successfully accomplishes this delicate balancing act – Douglas McKeown's *The Deadly Spawn* (Vipco).

Admittedly, the acting is largely poverty row, and the budget (while achieving miracles where the eponymous grisly carnivores are concerned) shows its limitations with some less-than-convincing matte paintings and model shots. And the score shows just how valuable the Jerry Goldsmiths of this world are. But one is prepared to

Video FILE

Tape Reviews by Barry Forshaw



Botanist Lowell Freeman (Bruce Dern), surveying the botanical specimens which he is helping to preserve in huge geodesic domes on a space-freighter, in Douglas Trumbull's *Silent Running* (CIC Video).



TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT

starburst's
at-a-glance video
guide... why didn't
we think of swapping this
idea a lot earlier?



HITS

1. *Silent Running* (CIC)
2. *Motel Hell* (Warner)
3. *The Mysterious* (Kingston)
4. *THX 1138* (Warner)
5. *Piranha* (WB)

PITS

1. *Blood Shack* (Liberty)
2. *From Earth to the Moon* (Kingston)
3. *Devils of Darkness* (Kingston)
4. *The Swarm* (Warner)
5. *Piranha II* (WB)

suspend criticism when the film is dotted with delicious comic ideas – a vegetarian dinner party given by an American matron for her friends, ends in bloody chaos – but not before a fledgling spawn has wormed its way into a blender. And instead of the shock appearance one is expecting, a flick of the switch inadvertently adds a meat ingredient to the salad! And there's the ingenuity displayed by a youthful film-buff character (Charles Hildebrandt) in dispatching the ravenous comet-spawned horrors – one of which is luring a monster to devour (and immortalise itself on) a radio playing opera (a comment on the low cultural aspirations of horror films? But Argento uses Verdi!).

While owing their design to Giger's *Alien*, the Spawns are a fetching bunch, veering from convincing to (deliberately) ludicrous – and the tape is one of those few items it's worth searching for.

IMPRESSIVE EFFECTS

Regular *Starburst* readers may remember the tantalising glimpse of Bobbie Bresnan on a recent book cover – and now whetted appetites can be further stoked by *Mausoleum* (Video-pace) in which director Michael Dugan is clearly thinking of the film's male audience in the candidness of his photography. However, John Buehler's special make-up effects are soon doing grotesque things to Ms. Bresnan's ample superstructure, and the snarling *Exorcist*-style demon he moulds is unquestionably the film's main claim to attention. Unlike Friedkin's prototype, Dugan's film makes little attempt to establish the "normalcy" of his protagonists, so we're involved in their destruction by supernatural forces. Still, those effects are impressive – particularly the twin gargoyle-like sprouts that sprout on the heroine's chest!

EXTRA XTR0

The experience of films on video and the cinema screen are two quite separate matters – usually, the former has little of the impact of a viewing auditorium (two classic examples – *Close Encounters* and *Alien* on TV!). However, another element is added to things when the video contains different material to the cinema version – as in the *Blade Runner* – or as in *Xtro* (Polygram).

Harry Bromley Davenport's imaginative British film may dip into several sources for its inspiration, but I was won over by two things – remarkably ingenious make-up effects (given the low budget) with the various gelatinous alien manifestations being effectively flesh-creeping. However, it was the constant avoidance of cliché in detail (if not in plot) which I found most refreshing – particularly the various powers acquired by the infected son of the alien host. The full-size Action Man

he despatches to murder a complaining neighbour, with its whirring, halting motion is a particularly inspired idea.

Polygram have made much of the new video ending but it's hardly worth the trumpeting: it's not spoiling anything to tell you that a Carrie/Allen rip-off replaces the more disturbing original which had the heroine surrounded by clones murmuring "Mummy". Nevertheless, despite its many flaws, still worthy of your attention.

Mention of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (Warner) leads us on to its long awaited video issue – and as the film has been extensively covered (both in this scholarly journal and elsewhere) I'd like to mention two aspects as yet untouched. Firstly – for all the usual problems with a film by Scott (characterisation taking a marked second place to striking visuals) this is still the most persuasive vision the cinema has yet presented of the future – not the glossy, unreal designer's delusion of most SF films, but a convincing mixture of high-tech wonders (air cars, 'mothership'-like advertising blimps) and the scruffy (belching industrial towers, street vendors, urban decay and overcrowding). The implied widening of the gap between the rich and the poor even adds a political dimension to the film – one that reminds us how SF can make cogent statements that may be otherwise unacceptable to the government of the day.

Philip K. Dick's novel is, of course, virtually a springboard for the film's embroidery on its themes, but it does embrace at least the thrust of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* – even if some ideas are confusing in the version finally issued. And that brings us on to what is actually the cut chosen for video issue. Recently, *Xtra* and *Suspina* were markedly different in their video form from the cinema prints, but despite much advance information to the contrary, the video is the British release print, saddled with over-verbose voice-over (instead of the more laconic original) and jarringly unconvincing "happy" ending. But don't let this put you off a remarkable film – unless you demand constant *Raiders* style action rather than the more atmospheric 40's film noir style Scott so carefully creates.

THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

Back in *Starburst* 50, Phil Edwards and John Brosnan offered two very disparate views of John Carpenter's *The Thing* (now out on CIC Video), the former full of euphoric praise, the latter in his best Yoda-beating vein. Looking at the video issue, I'm reminded that my deciding vote would have to be a floating one. Certainly, Phil's praise of the astonishing Rob Bottin effects couldn't be more accurate – the endlessly varied grisly manifestations of the malignant alien leave one breath-



A portrait of Kurt Russell in John Carpenter's recent version of *The Thing* (now available on CIC Video).

less (although those with a low gross-out point should beware!) but at the risk of being repetitive, one despairs of John Carpenter's lack of interest in his characters as opposed to the technical aspects of his films. The latter are, as usual, flawlessly handled – the editing here being particularly stunning. But again, the characters, after a few token bits of colour (roller-skating black guy, stoned insubordinate type) become almost totally blank – particularly compared to the brilliantly drawn group in the original Hawks/Nyby film. Still, perhaps genre fans should just cut their losses in Carpenter's case and enjoy what he can do (and did) in *Assault on Precinct 13*, *Halloween* and even *The Fog* – put together a superbly-acted piece of genre machinery. Perhaps when Carpenter realises he isn't getting out of his filmic alter-ego Kurt Russell what Hitchcock got out of James Stewart, a more flexible actor will widen his dramatic parameters. Finally, then, a film to see (and see again – if only to sort out the dizzying profusion of alien apparitions!)

OPPER THE ANDROID

It's a pleasure to come across such an

intelligent genre debut as Aaron Lipstadt's *Android* (AFE Video) – a low budget science fiction feature from Roger Corman's New World studios. Everything functions well – witty, lively scripting, tight direction and clever usage of economical sets and effects. But, the real coup of the film is Don Opper's eponymous android – Max 404; a nervous, gawky creation who patterns his courting technique on a video clip of James Stewart. Opper's playing is a masterpiece of understatement and steals the film.

STRONG ARM TACTICS

Director Michael Armstrong was a friend of the late, lamented Michael Reeves – but Armstrong's *Mark of the Devil* (Interview), made in tribute to Reeves' masterpiece *Witchfinder General* (also available on video) only shows the difference between a brilliantly personal vision and mere efficiency. Despite the much-publicised grisly detail of the horrors in Armstrong's film (tongues torn out by the roots, fingers crushed, burnings, floggings) Reeves' picture of a Cromwellian England in the grip of witch-



Dr. Daniel (Klaus Kinski) learns his experiments in android research are being discontinued by the Terracor Corporation in this scene from *Android* (AFE Video).

hunting fervour is a much more disturbing experience. This is because Armstrong's badly dubbed protagonists (with the exception of Herbert Lom in the Vincent Price *Witchfinder* role) don't register on any level of audience involvement – the heroine in particular is unprepossessing, and unlike the situation in Reeves' film, the clash of personalities (again, middle-aged authoritarian figure, young couple) no resonances are sounded – further, Anderson eschews Reeves' cathartic blood-bath at the end for a very unsatisfactory resolution. The only level the film really works is a kind of grim parade of grand guignol horrors – but these, as I've said, register only as a gory pantomime, and don't disturb in context in the way they surely should. Unless of course, you're squeamish – and you wouldn't be renting *Mark of the Devil* under those circumstances.

BRIEF NOTES

Capsule comments by *Starburst* Reviewer Barry Forshaw

Gordon Hessler's Murders in the Rue Morgue (Rank) – which bears little resemblance to Poe's story as any earlier version – apparently suffered some cross interference. But it's difficult to see how Hessler's film could have been as successful as some critics claim it might have been.

Death Dream (CineHollywood aka. *The Night Walk* or *Dead of Night*) has received some attention in serious film journals for Bob Clark's intelligent working of ideas about post-Vietnam guilt and American families into his vampires/zombie plot; special effects by Tom Savini make for a gripping climax.

Every night a new video tops *Plan 9 From Outer Space* for cosmically appalling acting – how we have Don Dohlers' *Night Beast* (Video); Grandiose credits (you'll love some of the pretensions!) are succeeded by a gut-wrenching (literally) alien monster killing the already catatonic cast.

It's murderous severed hand time again in *Demonoid* (M.H.E.) Samantha Eggar and Stuart Whitman's involvement in this cracking effort suggests that their careers are not in good health.

Fiend Without a Face (Kingston) is Arthur Crabtree's above-average B. & W. shocker that boasts effective stop-motion animation for its brain-cum-spinal column monsters – quite strong stuff for its day, and still watchable.

TV ZONE

by Richard Holliss

A book has just been published featuring the tv scripts from Channel 4's outrageously anarchic series *The Comic Strip*. With such classics as *Five Go Mad In Dorset*, *The Beat Generation*, and *Bad News Tour*, it's pleasing to know that the same manic team are back with a new series, one episode of which is based on two well-known films, its title? *SLAGS*.

Earlier last year I visited the location of this particular story and spoke with one of the programme's designers, Chris Hobbs. I came across Chris scrambling about among the ruins of a Thameside Warehouse, actually the old Courage Brewery near Tower Bridge. Leaving my name with the security man at the gate, in case I fell down a pothole or something just as dreadful, I asked Chris exactly what the story was about.

"It's difficult to explain, I suppose it's a send up of *West Side Story*, but what I've managed to do, unfortunately or fortunately, is turn it into a send up of *Blade Runner*. Chris pointed to a massive model set of motor parts, metal pipes and indescribable paraphernalia, all resembling the skyline in the opening of *Blade Runner*. "Our city is entirely made up of car engines and gear boxes and on the small screen will read almost as exciting as that establishing shot in *Blade Runner*. We won't have the slashes of flame, but it will have a lot of twinkling lights on it. There will be muslin between the buildings to lose the background, making it appear further away. I wanted to build it with lots of Coke bottles, but you can't find them nowadays."

"There's no direct spoofing of *Blade Runner* characters though, however *SLAGS* will feature its fair share of mutant kids and monsters." With that Chris produced an evil looking glove puppet from the drawer of a prop desk. "This is what you can do with an old garden glove and Marks and Spencer metal coat hangers. This little character will be seen scuttling along a wall outside the heroes' office window. The rest of my arm will be blackvelveted, with my fingers operating its nose. I'm really a frustrated puppeteer."

Chris suddenly remembers that there will be one *Blade Runner* lookalike. "In a bar there will be a friend of mine wearing a flying helmet and a padded overcoat. I'll put some tubes in it and some snow on his head he'll resemble the eye-specialist in the ice freezer." The episode Chris explains will feature a voice-over, a kindof Philip Marlowe type who keeps the atmosphere going. "One of the other characters is called Boy Madness. He has a laboratory piled high with chrome and glass, the centre of which contains his grandmother."

"Grandmother?"

"Yes, she's an electric grandmother, she chatters and looks like a send up of Psycho. She's got electric lights in her eyes and a metal arm. She is, I suppose, another monster. I like monsters. Boy Madness also has a flame thrower. It's made out of an old curtain stand and a couple of packing mounds. It will probably have a real flamethrower strapped to its side. Other weapons are

constructed from Victorian garden sprays. We did actually acquire some props from the *Flash Gordon* movie. They're alright, but far from good. I would have loved to have got some Star Wars material but couldn't find any."

Although it might sound slightly ludicrous to build futuristic weapons out of garden sprays, the expertise with which Chris designs them looks most convincing on screen. "It takes about an hour to construct these weapons," he continues, "we only had five days for the set-up, I would have liked more, two weeks, but it's out of the question. Shooting on this lot has to be completed in one day, although as this is number three in the series did manage to squeeze a little extra money out of them, up to £3,500. Normally the budget is £2,500."



Blade Runner, an inspiration for The Comic Strip production, *SLAGS*.

In fact, looking at the work that Chris and his team have done I found myself admiring any pile of rubbish that he cared to show me. "Our extras will wear anything. I found this orange bouncer in a dustbin. I cut the top off it and now it looks like a hat. If it all works, I would call it a triumph of ingenuity over money and time."

I followed Chris down into the basement. The building was enormous and our footsteps echoed eerily among the towering concrete pillars that supported the roof. "They're hoping to sell this building, so they've asked us to contribute towards the charity fund. There certainly won't be any more filming in here, due to its restoration, so we've been asked to treat it with a great deal of care. When this turned up as a home to shoot in Fulham Power Station and then in Croydon Power Station, but the Electricity Board changed their minds. They were concerned about the asbestos situation. It was a pity, there were sets there that would have dwarfed *Blade Runner*, just unbelievable. Machinery from top to bottom, almost the size of St Paul's Cathedral. Huge rows of it stretching into the distance. There, our prison was going to be a ventilation shaft twenty feet across. Now we have had to settle with this smaller set-up." Chris pointed to a row of grills that divided the corridor ahead. "The 'prison bars' are from the old Astoria. I saw them lying out the back and so I asked the man if we could have them. Beautiful grills and they didn't cost a penny. Everything's scrounged, it's the only way to do it on a small budget. If you carry the audience along with it they don't mind, it's all part of the fun."

And if audience response to the first series of *The Comic Strip* is anything to go by then Chris needn't worry.

My apologies all round for getting my facts wrong in this column in Issue 65 regarding the "video nasty" censorship situation. I said that a video censorship board had already been set up when, of course, this is not yet the case. The Private Member's Bill which will create such a censorship apparatus is still going through Parliament though at a speed and ease which makes it becoming law a foregone conclusion. My confusion arose from a piece in one of the popular newspapers some time back that gave me the false impression that the writer was describing something already in existence rather than a future situation.

Otherwise everything else I said in Issue 65 on the subject still stands. Even more so, as the "video nasty" controversy has got even wilder and sillier since I wrote those words back in October of '83. For example, the Archbishop of Canterbury stated in the House of Lords that "video nasties" were the main cause of violent crime in the U.K. (closely followed by alcohol and television), which is a pretty impressive achievement for something that's only been around for a few years. Remember how little violent crime there was before video recorders came along? You don't? Well, you'll never be an Archbishop then.

There have also been claims that practically every six year old child in the country is sitting and watching "nasties" every day, their little brains rotting and oozing away under the evil influences. "We are creating a social time bomb!" cried one school teacher, the suggestion being that in 5 to 10 years time all these tots would be stalking the streets acting out their favourite scenes from *Spot On Your Driller Killer*. To illustrate this shock-horror phenomenon a BBC news programme showed a child watching a "video nasty". And guess what the "video nasty" was... none other than Howard Hawks' 1931 version of *The Thing*.

As a writer in *New Society* observed the current video nasty hysteria in the media is similar to what took place in America in the early 1950s over horror comics. Like the "nasties", the horror comics became the easy, safe target on which to blame juvenile delinquency and everything else that was wrong with American youth at the time. A rigid form of censorship was imposed within the comic book industry, horror comics disappeared and America became, of course, the pure, pristine and crimeless society we know so well today.

Adding fuel to the "nasty" controversy has been the timely arrival of David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* which has been seized upon by the popular press as a nasty among nasties. Ironically, when the film reviewer on the London *Standard* newspaper, Alexander Walker, used his review of *Videodrome* to attack the whole video censorship movement his page was hastily pulled from the paper by nervous *Standard* executives who didn't want to print such an unfashionable view. Among other things Walker said, of Mr Graham Bright's Video Recording Bill, that it was: "One of the most restrictive and least necessary bills ever considered by a British Parliament." He also said the whole "video nasty" controversy was a "deliberately-created moral panic... a policeman's dream." He finished by saying: "My friends, we are in for such a reign of intolerance as regards publicly imposed morality as I had never guessed was possible in a country not known for its wisdom in such matters."

Good stuff. Pity that only the readers of the first edition got to see it (though the *Guardian* reprinted the above quotes the following day). So far

It's Only A MOVIE

A Film Column by John Brosnan



The 1951 equivalent of a video nasty? James Arness in the title role of Howard Hawks' original version of *The Thing*.

there's been very little public opposition to Bright's Bill and it's easy to understand why. Any MP, journalist or public figure who even says, "Hey, let's not introduce a whole new censorship system so hastily—let's look at the situation a little more calmly first," is in danger of sounding as if they're advocating sex and violence videos for 6

year olds. So it's not surprising that Bright has been able to hustle his obnoxious piece of legislation through Parliament at such a disturbing speed.

It's being presented as the only means of protecting children from "video nasties" as if the Obscene Publications Act wasn't being used to

prosecute and effectively ban the "nasties" one by one at the moment. And not only the obvious "nasties" as such, like *Driller Killer* and *I Spit On Your Grave* but movies like *The Living Dead from Manchester Morgue* which has been staggering around the cinema circuits, causing a great deal of mirth, since 1972! (I'm sure it was the Manchester police who jumped on this one; they probably didn't like the way they were portrayed by the Italian actors).

So why do we need Bright's Bill? Well, according to the Under-Secretary of State, Mr David Mellor: "We all know that proceeding under the Obscene Publications Act can take a long time during which offending videos can still be sold openly in other parts of the country. By the time there is a conviction, if there is one, much of the damage will have been done . . . That is why the Bill will provide simple, speedy justice against the complexities, the months of delay and the prolonged agonies of long jury trials . . ."

In other words the police can't always rely on juries to agree with their definition of a "video nasty". A real nuisance to law and order, those juries are. But hang on, Mr Mellor, there's a flaw in your logic. It's going to be at least a year or 18 months before Mr Bright's Bill becomes law—surely by that time all the remaining "nasties" can be banned using the Obscene Publications act? And, gosh, think of all those young minds that can be corrupted during the 18 months or so before Bright's Bill becomes law and miraculously wipes out the "video nasty" menace at a stroke . . .

The truth is that the fuss over the "video nasties" is being used as an excuse by the government to introduce a new censorship system that will control all videos. Mr Bright's Bill has a vast number of clauses and subsections and these manage to cover every category of videos from educational videos to home-produced videos. Here's Mr Mellor again: "Under the act, if this Bill is passed, we shall have the opportunity to consider whether there is any difference between a film being shown in the carefully controlled circumstances of a cinema and a film that, once the cassette leaves the shop, is not controlled and no one can guarantee who will see it in the home. I stress to the House that that will only affect a limited number of films in the '18' category . . ."

Oh yeah? I'll bet it will! What he's saying is that while the government has no objection to people watching "18" rated films in the "carefully controlled circumstances of a cinema" (has he visited a cinema recently?) the government can't leave it up to the members of the public to decide whether or not they should watch these same films in the privacy of their own homes! Nor can the government trust parents to control what their children watch . . .

And remember that here we're talking about films passed by the censor, not video nasties. Though, of course, as far as some people are concerned, such as MPs, the police and Mary Whitehouse, any horror movie—or any movie containing graphic sex or violence—is automatically a video nasty (I heard that the Manchester police seized *Apocalypse Now* as a nasty!). As I said in the column in *Starburst* 66 video versions of films are going to be much more censored than the ones you can see in the cinema. But I also fear that there is going to be a backlash against the film censors too—as the *Videohoma* controversy unfortunately makes plain. Censorship right across the board is going to be considerably tightened up, I predict, and will spread to books and comics . . .

Yes folks, 1984 has definitely arrived.

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BOOK WORLD

by Chris Charles

Fantasy series such as Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun* and Stephen Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant* are all the rage at the moment, and other publishers seem to be looking for their own fantasy epic in the hope of capturing a similar market. Corgi's entry into the stakes is *Pawn of Prophecy* by David Eddings (£1.75), the first book in a five-volume sequence with the overall title of *The Book of the Belgariad*. "A magnificent epic of immense scope set against a history of seven thousand years of the struggles of gods and kings and men," proclaims the blurb, and Corgi's publicity department also offer the bait of a full-colour poster for readers who send in proof of purchase of the book. The poster is a map of the world on which Eddings' books are set.

Is it all worth it? Well, to be brutally frank, I think Corgi have a lame duck on their hands here. They've obviously bought the book from its American publisher with high hopes and are putting quite a bit of money and effort into promoting the series. But it's hard to see why on the basis of *Pawn of Prophecy*. It's the story of a young boy, Garion, who grows up on a remote farm under the tutelage of his Aunt Pol and gradually comes to realize that both he and Aunt Pol are to play a significant part in the world's destiny. How exactly this will happen will presumably be revealed in succeeding volumes.

* Apparently the author decided to write a fantasy series "in an effort to develop certain technical and philosophical ideas concerning the genre." Whatever these ideas are, they do not appear to be in evidence in *Pawn of Prophecy*, which is, by any standards, a very average book. Eddings writes clearly and literately enough once the reader is past a very confusing and cluttered prologue, but it's an unremarkable tale he has to tell. We have the usual medley of warring nations, but there's nothing new in Eddings' world and he has an unfortunate habit of inventing names which are either silly or confusingly similar. There's a male friend of Garion's called Dooron, which I kept reading as Do-reen. Then we have Arends, Alorna, Angarak, Algama, Aldur — in the end I didn't know my Nadraks from my Ugloland. The plot — such as it is — also leaves a lot to be desired. Garion and his aunt are forced to flee from their farm and embark upon a trek around the land of Sendana; but Garion's gradual discovery of his special destiny relies on him continually eavesdropping on the private conversations of adults in a manner which strains the reader's credibility and made me suspect that plotting is not the author's strong point. In fact, I can't really see where his strengths lie. This is an uninspired book, low on both invention and imagination.

Sphere have just published the first volume of "a futureworld epic" with the overall title of *The Amtrak Wars* by Patrick Tilley. *Book 1: Cloud Warrior* (£1.95) is set in the mid-west of America about a thousand years after a nuclear war devastated the continent. The Amtrak Federation has retreated underground and kept their technology intact, while the survivors of the blast, the Mutes, have remained on the radioactive surface of the earth in a more primitive condition, living off the land and possessing psychic powers. The Mutes await the fulfilment of a prophecy, but they are continually harried by the Amtrak Federation, who emerge on expeditions from the underground cities to root out and kill the Mutes as a prelude to their recolonization of the continent.

What we have here is a science fiction version of the Old West, with determined pioneers on wagon trains clearing the land of Indians. The parallels are quite explicitly made by the author, who has obviously enjoyed adapting the format to science fiction. The Mutes have names like Moorhead and Shaka-kat, and they worship a mother-goddess called Mo-town. I gave the author the benefit of the doubt on this, but no explanation was forthcoming in the first volume; indeed, *Cloud Warrior* leaves most of its plot threads dangling.

I found the book a smooth enough read, if a trifle overlong; there's nothing particularly original on offer in the story, but it is a skilful blending of familiar SF themes, written with an eye on the mass market. The only real irritations were unconvincing outbursts of military zealotry amongst the Federation forces and the hoary device of having the mutes call Chicago She-Kargo, Michigan Me-Sheegun, and so on — this sort of thing really is old hat in SF. But overall this is a professionally crafted SF adventure with pertinence to something more complex and rewarding.

Tik-Tok by John Sladek (Gollancz, £7.95) continues the author's familiar fascination with robots, though in this novel the robot is far from being the benign sort we encountered in *Roderick*. *Tik-tok* is, in fact, a callous murderer, his "asimov" circuits, which are supposed to prevent him from killing, having somehow malfunctioned, leaving him with the urge to do as much harm to people as possible. From ordinary robotic origins *Tik-Tok* eventually progresses to become Vice-President of the United States in an episodic novel which is full of Sladek's usual wit and wry comments on the foibles of American society. I do wonder, though, if the focus of his writing is becoming too narrow and his preoccupations too familiar and repetitive.

For adventure games fans Penguin have produced an attractive boxed set of Steve

Jackson's *Sorcery!* at £3.95 for two volumes. Volume One explains the rules of the game and Volume Two outlines the spells necessary for the player to survive in his quest. I dipped into the first book and got "killed" after about five minutes; so much for heroism.

The Complete Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy Lists by Maxim Jakubowski and Malcolm Edwards (Grenada, £2.95) has a self-explanatory title and is filled with trivias which will prove fascinating to addicts like myself. I particularly liked Brian Aldiss's "Fifteen Useful Pieces of Alien Vocabulary", which includes words meaning "To be well and in bed with two pretty sisters" and "The disagreeable experience of listening to oneself in the middle of a long speech and neither understanding when one is saying nor enjoying the manner in which it is being said."



Credit where credit is due. In *Serburb 66* this column was incorrectly titled as *Film Book World* by *Phil Edwards*; it should have read *Book World* by *Chris Charles*. Apologies to both gentlemen for the error.

BOOK WORLD

EXTRA

BRILLIANT BRADBURY

Feature by Forrest J Ackerman



"Brilliant, Ray - brilliant! Now make it more brilliant!" Thus spoke Saul Bass, reacting to the *Martian Chronicles*' screenplay adaptation of an unpublished story he wrote 37 years ago. It was, perhaps, the genesis of "The Creatures Time Forgot", printed in a 1940s' *Planet Stories* and retitled "Frost & Fire" when republished in his collection *R is For Rocket*.

At a cost of \$1,250,000, and over a time span of 2 years, it has been made into a movie. A short of about a half hour's duration. With Les Tremayne, the General who lost to the Martians in *War of the Worlds*, and veteran actor John Abbott, who has played one of the undead in his time in *The Vampire's Ghost*.



It's called *Quest* and it is a marvel to behold. The sad part is, you may never be able to behold it. Unless you go to Japan. To the temple at Atami. *Quest* was made at the behest of the temple guardians, specifically for showing to adherents and visitors.

A pity, for when one assesses Bradbury's translations to the screen, in sum, one finds them wanting. *The Illustrated Man*: miserable. *The Picasso Summer*: an almost unseen disaster. *It Came From Outer Space*: 85% Bradbury, and not bad, but not a classic. *Moby Dick*: you loved it or hated it. *Something Wicked*: a box office fiasco that quickly faded from the screen. Aficionados by and large loved it but the paying public stayed away in droves.



But *Quest* - I Ah, *Quest*. By my lights *Quest* is beyond the shadow of a doubt his best.

Imaginative, awesome, magical. What *The Martian Chronicles* should have been. Eerie, exciting, beautiful. The prose poetry of Bradbury transcentally transposed to the screen by the cinematic sorcery of Saul Bass.

Mysterious, magnetic, a masterpiece in miniature.

Allegory, fairy tale? Who knows - who cares? One flows with the rhythm of the wonders unfolding before one's bedazzled eyes.

Somewhere that might be in a mountain fast-



Top left: A portrait of Ray Bradbury. Bottom left: The television version of *The Martian Chronicles* was a disappointment to Bradbury. Centre: A scene from *It Came From Outer Space*. Above: A Chronic (les) Martian struggles to put up his umbrella. Top right: The Xennmorph from Bradbury's *Outer Space*. Bottom right: A deluging downpour threatens to drown an astronaut in *The Illustrated Man*.



ness of Tibet or East of Erendorn lives a dwindling tribe of humans in a cavern from which they cannot escape. Periodically they send one of their youngest members forth on a mission impossible, to get to a great gate before he dies and open it to let the sun shine in.

The difficulty is, by the time the child gets anywhere near the Gate - provided he survives the perils in his path to get that far - he will be an old man and die.

A journey that lasts perhaps 80 years? But surely one could encompass the world in that length of time!

Explanation: the entire lifespan of these people is only... 8 days! Infancy, childhood's end, youth, maturity, middle age, old age, death - all occur within a week and a day for this moribund race.

How come? Quien sabe. Accept. Be entertained. The Youngest Boy Yet is set upon the Quest for the Holy Gate. En route he is attacked by a sort of toothless walrusoid (the creature is not too clearly seen, a blur of action) and has an encounter with a kind of Neanderthal savage who, anachronistically, is intelligent enough to challenge him to a strange electronic/laser-ray game resembling futuristic chess or checkers.



Along the way the eye is dazzled by arcane architecture, huge edifices, monumental mazes. It is not the kind of picture you can see once and come away and accurately describe all the strange things you saw. At least I couldn't. Next time send someone from *Mens* to review it...

Suffice it to say, *Quest* is Bradbury's best, not to be missed if you've ever the opportunity to see it. Maybe someday Japan will host a World Science Fiction Convention (banzai sci-fi!) and then we can all take a side trip to Atami, the temple and... *Quest*.

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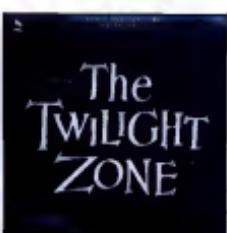
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